



108

Greatest Of All Times

*globally selected  
PERSONALITIES*

ISBN:978-81-982847-8-5

Compiled by:

Prof Dr S Ramalingam

9 Aug 1938 <::><::><::> 86 Years



The time your game is most  
vulnerable is when you're ahead;  
never let up.

— Rod Laver —

AZ QUOTES



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9 Aug 1938



86 Years [2024]

*The Rocket*

9 9 1969



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWo8Pb4oKdo&ab\\_channel=GustavoRoman](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWo8Pb4oKdo&ab_channel=GustavoRoman)

**Rod Laver**  
*The Rocket*

SURFACE	Professional Career only	Wins
Overall	79.7% (571-145)	72
Hard	81.9% (177-39)	26
Clay	75.2% (121-40)	14
Grass	84.8% (89-16)	8
Carpet	78.6% (184-50)	24

This is the WRAPPER of the Book released/published by the Department of Physical Education and Sports of Dr MGR Educational and Research Institute, Chennai – 600 095, INDIA

Kindly visit the Web Page to reach/read the Book:

[https://archive.org/details/mgr-2023-dpes-rod-laver\\_202301](https://archive.org/details/mgr-2023-dpes-rod-laver_202301)

**09 09 1969**

**The day Rod Laver became the first man to do the  
coveted calendar-year Grand Slam twice**

*Every day, Tennis Majors looks back to some of the biggest moments  
in tennis history. On September 9, 1969, Rod Laver beat Tony Roche to  
complete the calendar-year Grand Slam for the second time*

**WHAT HAPPENED EXACTLY ON THAT DAY**

On this day, September 9, 1969, Rod Laver, who had already achieved the Grand Slam once, as an amateur, in 1962, defeated Tony Roche in the US Open final (7-9, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2) to win a fourth consecutive major title in the same year; the calendar-year Grand Slam. Although in 1962 many experts had claimed that the absence of the best tennis players in the world clouded his achievement, this time, in the Open era, there was no way to diminish the value of his feat.

**THE PLAYERS: ROD LAVER AND TONY ROCHE**

Rod Laver, "Rocket", left-handed Australian genius

His name is immortalised in tennis history and  
the centre court at the Australian Open  
was named after him in 2001, and in 2017,  
Roger Federer established a Team Competition which was named  
" THE LAVER CUP."

**Source:**

<https://www.tennismajors.com/us-open-news/september-9-1969-the-day-rod-laver-completed-his-second-grand-slam-487356.html>

**Also visit to watch:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwPo-6Hxiuk&ab\\_channel=USOpenTennisChampionships](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwPo-6Hxiuk&ab_channel=USOpenTennisChampionships)

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# Performance at a Glance

## Grand Slam record singles:

- Australian Open W (1960, **1962**, **1969**)
- French Open W (**1962**, **1969**)
- Wimbledon W (1961, **1962**, 1968, **1969**)
- US Open W (**1962**, **1969**)

## Doubles:

- Australian Open W (1959, 1960, 1961, 1969)
- French Open W (1961)
- Wimbledon W (1970)
- US Open F (1960, 1970, 1973)

## Mixed:

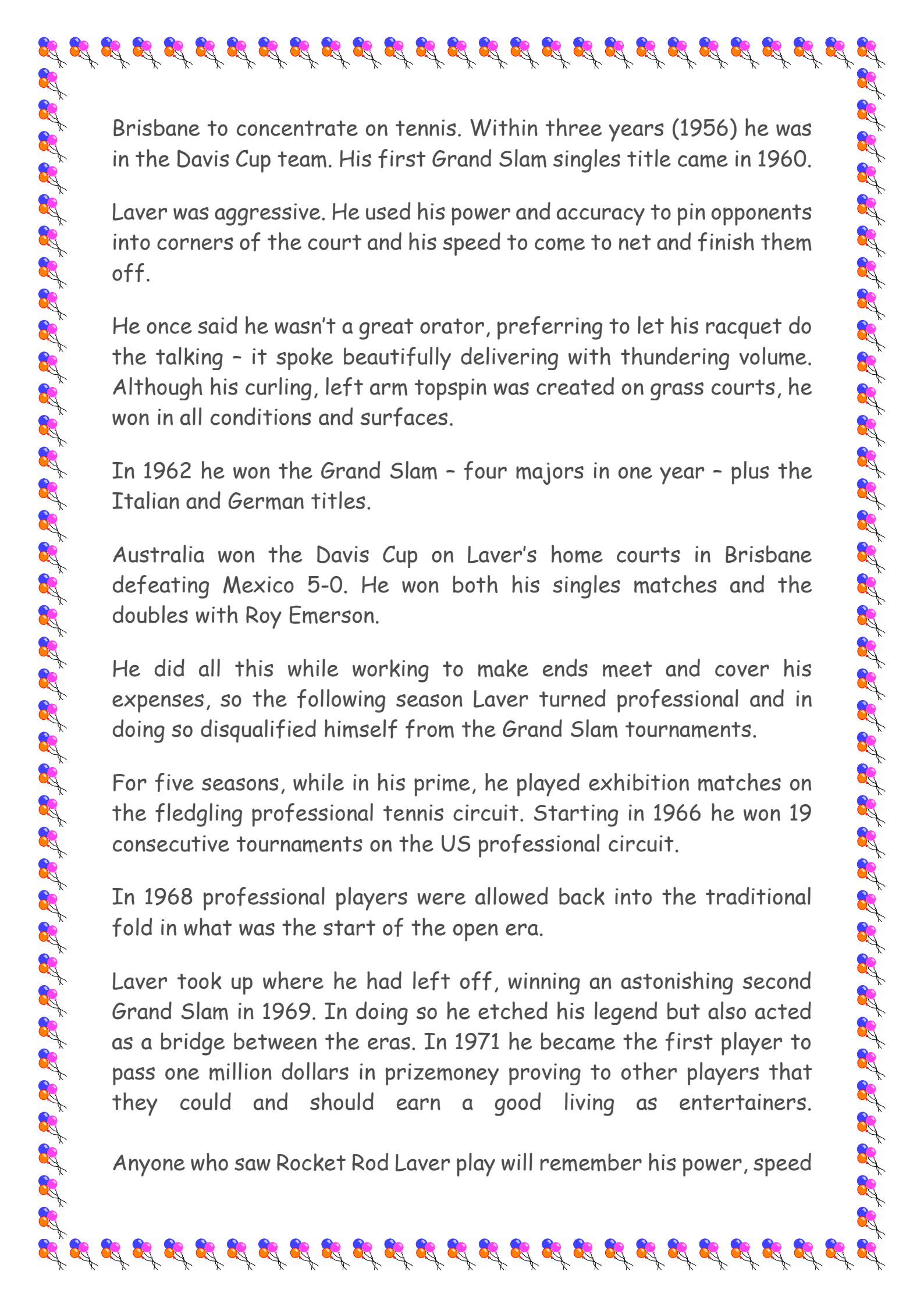
- Australian Open F (1959)
- French Open W (1961)
- Wimbledon W (1959, 1960)
- Team competition: Davis Cup W (1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1973)

**Laver** was known for his speed and thunderous left arm, which earned him the nickname "Rocket". He soared above the sport both as an amateur and a professional.

He grew up playing on a court rolled on his family's cattle farm in outback Queensland.

As a small boy he built his game around his gifts of speed and power, honing them with relentless determination and passion.

At 15 he came under the eye of Australia's legendary Davis Cup Captain Harry Hopman who suggested he leave school and move to



Brisbane to concentrate on tennis. Within three years (1956) he was in the Davis Cup team. His first Grand Slam singles title came in 1960.

Laver was aggressive. He used his power and accuracy to pin opponents into corners of the court and his speed to come to net and finish them off.

He once said he wasn't a great orator, preferring to let his racquet do the talking - it spoke beautifully delivering with thundering volume. Although his curling, left arm topspin was created on grass courts, he won in all conditions and surfaces.

In 1962 he won the Grand Slam - four majors in one year - plus the Italian and German titles.

Australia won the Davis Cup on Laver's home courts in Brisbane defeating Mexico 5-0. He won both his singles matches and the doubles with Roy Emerson.

He did all this while working to make ends meet and cover his expenses, so the following season Laver turned professional and in doing so disqualified himself from the Grand Slam tournaments.

For five seasons, while in his prime, he played exhibition matches on the fledgling professional tennis circuit. Starting in 1966 he won 19 consecutive tournaments on the US professional circuit.

In 1968 professional players were allowed back into the traditional fold in what was the start of the open era.

Laver took up where he had left off, winning an astonishing second Grand Slam in 1969. In doing so he etched his legend but also acted as a bridge between the eras. In 1971 he became the first player to pass one million dollars in prizemoney proving to other players that they could and should earn a good living as entertainers.

Anyone who saw Rocket Rod Laver play will remember his power, speed

and accuracy. They also saw a humble man who knew the work required for greatness and the respect and love that needed to be shown to opponents and the sport itself. It remains an eternal spring of inspiration for future generations.

Following is his Performance in three stages, as an amateur, as a professional and in Open Era, in international tennis:

Amateur (53)							Professional (72)						Open Era (73)										Total
1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976		
0	2	3	1	9	16	22	6	11	17	16	19	3	10	18	15	7	5	7	6	5	0	198	

## Davis Cup

Laver won 16 out of 20 Davis Cup singles matches and all four of his doubles. Laver was a member of the victorious Australian Davis Cup teams in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1973.

Laver helped Australia win the Davis Cup four consecutive times from 1959 to 1962. In 1973, professionals were permitted to play in the Davis Cup for the first time, and Laver was on a winning team for the fifth time, claiming two singles and a doubles rubber in the final as Australia beat the United States 5-0.

Australia was crowned Davis Cup champions in each of the five seasons Laver played in the competition. Laver won 16 out of 20 Davis Cup singles matches and all four of his doubles.

To know more micro-level details, please visit the following web pages:

01] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod\\_Laver\\_career\\_statistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod_Laver_career_statistics)

02] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod\\_Laver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod_Laver)

03] <https://www.tennisfame.com/hall-of-famers/inductees/rod-laver>

04] <https://www.atptour.com/en/players/rod-laver/I058/overview>

05] <https://lavercup.com/rod-laver>

06] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod\\_Laver\\_career\\_statistics#:~:text=This is a list of,Jack Kramer's professional circuit.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod_Laver_career_statistics#:~:text=This is a list of,Jack Kramer's professional circuit.)

# Laver CUP

*Honouring a Legend*



Please visit: <https://lavercup.com/>

## Background:

The tournament is named after Australian Rod Laver, a tennis player widely regarded as one of the greatest in the history of the sport (He won all four major titles in the same calendar year, winning the Grand Slam twice in singles, in 1962 and 1969; *still, the latter remains the only player had done till 2024.*) Roger Federer's management company, TEAM8, Brazilian businessman and former Davis Cup player Jorge Paulo Lemann, and Tennis Australia partnered to create the Laver Cup. Roger Federer was inspired to create a tennis team tournament based on the biennial Ryder Cup golf tournament, which features the best golfers from the United States playing against the best golfers from Europe. However, Laver Cup differs as it

is purely an invitational event based on past historical performances; selection of (and the playing agreement with) the tournament participants are not automatically based from the highest ranked players of the recent ATP Tour world rankings.

### Selection of Team:

#### Europe v. The World

Each team is comprised of six players, and led by a team captain, who is a legend of the sport. The captain of Europe is **Bjorn Borg**, and the captain of Team World is **John McEnroe**.

Three of the six players qualify based on their ATP singles ranking as of the Monday following the French Open. Three are "captain's picks", announced by the start of the US Open.

### Format:

The event consists of five sessions – **THREE**-day sessions and **TWO** night sessions - played over three days (Friday – Sunday).

Both singles and doubles are best of three sets with ad scoring. In the event of split sets, the third set is a 10-point match tiebreaker.

Friday's line-up is announced on Thursday afternoon.

Saturday's line-up is announced an hour after play ends on Friday night.

Sunday's line-up is announced an hour after play ends on Saturday night.

Match-ups are determined through the exchange of line-up cards by the captains.

### Schedule of the Tournament:

Day ONE <:> Friday			Points available
DAY Session			
Europe	Match 1: Singles	The World	4 (4x1)
Europe	Match 2: Singles	The World	
NIGHT Session			
Europe	Match 3: Singles	The World	
Europe	Match 4: Doubles	The World	
Day TWO <:> Saturday			
DAY Session			
Europe	Match 5: Singles	The World	8
Europe	Match 6: Singles	The World	
NIGHT Session			

Europe	Match 7: Singles	The World	(4x2)
Europe	Match 8: Doubles	The World	
<b>Day THREE &lt;:&gt; Sunday</b>			
<b>DAY Session</b>			
Europe	Match 9: Singles	The World	12 (4x3)
Europe	Match 10: Singles	The World	
Europe	Match 11: Singles	The World	
Europe	Match 12: Doubles	The World	
<b>TOTAL Points available</b>			<b>24</b>

### Note:

This schedule and format is provisional and is subject to alteration without notice (for example, the starting time of sessions may change if the tournament is behind schedule).

### Scoring of Points:

Each player competes in at least one singles match during the first two days.

No player can play singles more than twice during the three days.

At least four of the six players must play doubles. No doubles combination is played more than once, unless for the Decider on Day 3, if points are 12:12.

The winning team must reach 13 points.

In the event of a tie after all 12 matches are played, a final overtime doubles match – a Decider – is played as a regular set with ad scoring and a tiebreak.

In the event that only one match is required on Sunday, an exhibition match is played following the trophy ceremony.

### Location:

- The location of the Laver Cup rotates between Europe and the rest of the world cities each year.
- The event takes place every year, the second week after the US Open.

# ROD LAVER ARENA



<https://rodlaverarena.com.au/>

Rod Laver Arena was opened at Melbourne Park in 1988 as part of the National Tennis Centre complex.

The popular arena is centre court for the Australian Open and hosts a wide range of live sport and entertainment events, from historic grand slam showdowns to world-famous international touring artists.

Rod Laver Arena enjoys a global reputation as a world-class venue known for hosting the best in sports, live entertainment, and premier event experiences.

*Melbourne & Olympic Parks (M&OP) acknowledges the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Owners of the land on which the precinct is located and recognise their ongoing connection to this land, and rich culture. We pay respects to their Elders past, present and future.*



<https://monumentaaustralia.org.au/links>

**Monument Australia**  
[Self-funded & Non-profit Organization]

## **Rod Laver**





The sculpture commemorates tennis player, Rod Laver who holds the record for titles won in career, and was the World No. 1 player for seven consecutive years, from 1964 to 1970 (from 1964 to 1967 in the professional circuit).

Rod Laver is the only tennis player to have twice won the Grand Slam (all four major singles titles in the same year) - first as an amateur in 1962 and second as a professional in 1969. He is the only male player and was the first player, male or female, to have won the Grand Slam during the open era.

Rod Laver is the second and last male player to win each major title twice in his career. Only Roy Emerson and Margaret Court had won all four Grand Slam tournaments twice before Laver in the history of tennis.

## Location

Address:	Olympic Boulevard & Batman Avenue, Tennis Centre, Melbourne, 3000
State:	VIC
Area:	AUS
GPS Coordinates:	Lat: -37.822229 Long: 144.979065 <small>Note: GPS Coordinates are approximate.</small>

## Details

Monument Type:	Sculpture
Monument Theme:	People
Sub-Theme:	Sport
Artist:	Lis Johnson (Barkers Creek, VIC)

## Dedication

Approx. Monument Dedication Date:	January-2017
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## Front Inscription

Rod Laver AC MBE

Rod "Rocket" Laver is among the greatest tennis players the world has ever seen.

Born in 1938 in Rockhampton, Queensland, Laver is the only player to have completed the coveted "Grand Slam" twice - winning all four major singles titles in the same year.

Laver was ranked world No.1 for seven consecutive years and won more than 200 singles titles, a record in the men's game. His sporting demeanour on and off the court won the admiration of fans worldwide.

Belying his mighty achievements, Laver remains an unassuming champion, and inspiration to his fellow Australians and a beloved national treasure.

Calendar Year Grand Slam (Singles): 1962, 1969

Winner of 20 Grand Slam titles

Singles Champion:

Australian Open 1960, 1962, 1969

Roland Garros 1962, 1969

Wimbledon 1961, 1962, 1968, 1969

US Open 1962, 1969

Australian Davis Cup Representative: 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1973

Davis Cup Victories: 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1973

[Please visit this Web Page:](#)

<https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/people/sport/display/96126-rod-laver>



A panoramic view of Rod Laver Arena during a day session  
at the 2020 Australian Open

# Biography

## *Rod Laver*

Rod "Rocket" Laver has been called the greatest tennis player of the twentieth century, and for good reason. He is the only player in the history of tennis to win two Grand Slams—taking the singles titles of the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon, and the U.S. Open in a single year. His first Grand Slam came in 1962, while he was still an amateur, but when later that year he turned professional, he was no longer eligible to play those tournaments. With the advent of the Open era in 1968, however, pros like Laver were once again allowed to compete in the Grand Slam tournaments, and the Australian wonder once again scored the Royal Flush of tennis, winning his second Grand Slam in 1969. Tennis historians contend that, had Laver been able to play in those intervening years, he may have won as many as nine Wimbledon in a row and no telling how many Grand Slams.

### Chronology

**1938 :> Born August 9 in Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia, to Roy Stanley and Melba Laver**

**1944 :> From the age of six Laver begins competing against his older brothers in tennis matches**



1951 :> Loses to his older brother Bon in the Central Queensland junior final

1953 :> Quits school to devote full time to tennis, coached by Harry

1956 :> Wins the U.S. junior championship

1957 :> Serves in the Australian Army

1958 :> Upsets American Barry MacKay in the second round of Queen's Club Tournament and gains international notice

1959 :> Playing with the Australian Davis Cup team, Laver helps to beat the United States

1959 :> Loses in the finals of the U.S. singles championship at Forest Hills

1960 :> Wins his first Australian singles title

1961 :> Wins his first Wimbledon singles title, but loses at Forest Hills in the finals

1961 :> Offered \$33,000 to join Jack Kramer's pro tour, but refuses

1962 :> Scores his first Grand Slam, winning the singles championships in Australia, France, England, and the United States, the first tennis player to do so since America's Don Budge in 1938

1962 :> Turns professional, signing a three-year, \$110,000 contract, and is thus barred for the next five years from participation in amateur championships

1964 :> Wins U.S. Pro singles title

1966-70 :> Wins 19 consecutive titles in the U.S. Pro circuit

1968 :> With advent of Open era in tennis, Laver resumes play in Grand Slam tournaments, winning Wimbledon in a final lasting less than an hour

1969 :> Wins his second Grand Slam, a record no other tennis player has equalled

1971 :> Earns a record \$292,000, boosting his overall tennis earnings to over a million, the highest of any tennis player

1972 :> Plays in finals of first World Championship of Tennis

1973:> Allowed to play Davis Cup again, helping Australia to win the cup away from the United States

1976:> Signs with World Team Tennis and named Rookie of the Year at age 38

1978 :> Retires from tennis

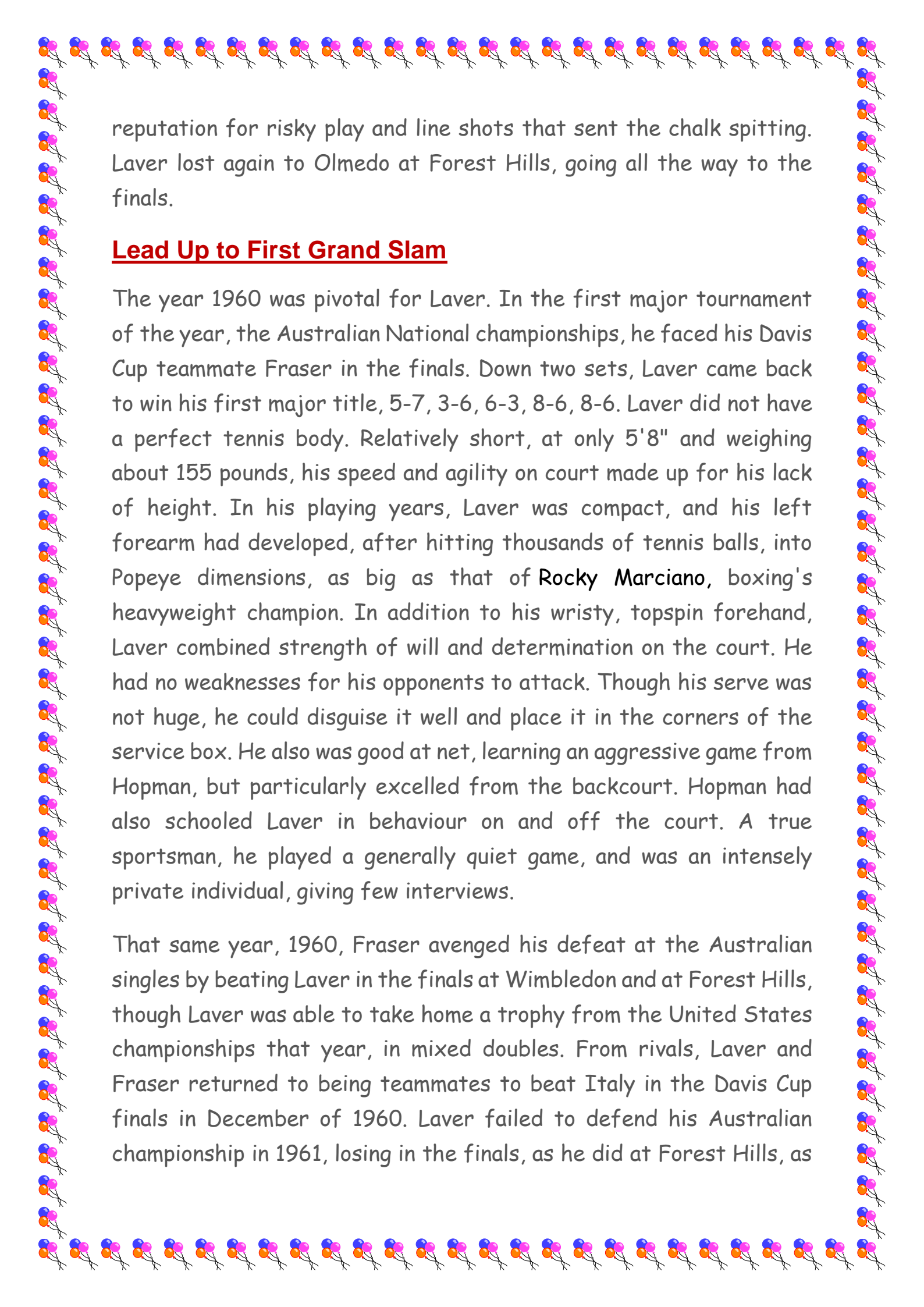
1981:> Inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame

1999 :> Suffers a stroke and has to re-learn how to play tennis

2000 :> Center court at Australia's Melbourne Park, home of the Australian Open, is named Rod Laver Court in his honour

### Amateur Years

After serving a year in the Australian Army in 1957, Laver was again back in the amateur rankings, and in June of 1958 surprised one of America's top-seeded players, Barry MacKay, knocking him out of the second round of London's Queen's Club Tournament, 6-3, 6-3. This victory was an announcement to the tennis world: Laver was at the gates. At the time of his victory over MacKay, Laver was ranked only eighth in Australia, demonstrating the depth of tennis talent Down Under. In 1959 Laver, who had to wait his turn until older players either retired or turned pro, was finally selected for his country's Davis Cup team, along with Neale Fraser and Roy Emerson. The Australians defeated the Americans that year, and though Laver lost twice—one of the losses in 66 games to Alex Olmedo—his performance did not go unnoticed. Arthur Dale of the **New York Times** noted that "Laver's performance in defeat made the victory of The Chief [Olmedo] all the more noteworthy. The twenty-one-year-old left-hander [Laver] made chalk shots that would have discouraged anyone less hardy." Already Laver was developing his

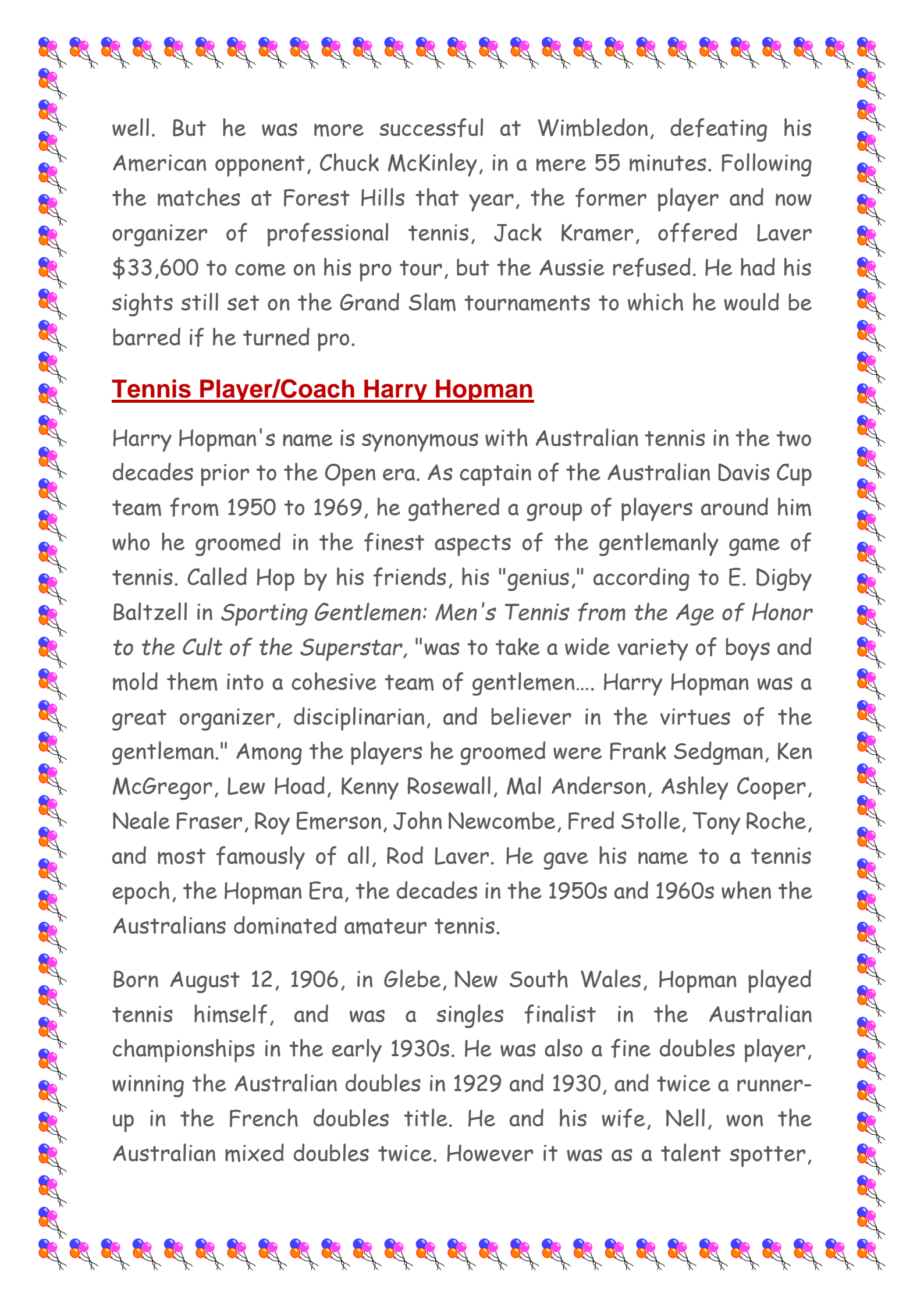
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reputation for risky play and line shots that sent the chalk spitting. Laver lost again to Olmedo at Forest Hills, going all the way to the finals.

### **Lead Up to First Grand Slam**

The year 1960 was pivotal for Laver. In the first major tournament of the year, the Australian National championships, he faced his Davis Cup teammate Fraser in the finals. Down two sets, Laver came back to win his first major title, 5-7, 3-6, 6-3, 8-6, 8-6. Laver did not have a perfect tennis body. Relatively short, at only 5'8" and weighing about 155 pounds, his speed and agility on court made up for his lack of height. In his playing years, Laver was compact, and his left forearm had developed, after hitting thousands of tennis balls, into Popeye dimensions, as big as that of Rocky Marciano, boxing's heavyweight champion. In addition to his wristy, topspin forehand, Laver combined strength of will and determination on the court. He had no weaknesses for his opponents to attack. Though his serve was not huge, he could disguise it well and place it in the corners of the service box. He also was good at net, learning an aggressive game from Hopman, but particularly excelled from the backcourt. Hopman had also schooled Laver in behaviour on and off the court. A true sportsman, he played a generally quiet game, and was an intensely private individual, giving few interviews.

That same year, 1960, Fraser avenged his defeat at the Australian singles by beating Laver in the finals at Wimbledon and at Forest Hills, though Laver was able to take home a trophy from the United States championships that year, in mixed doubles. From rivals, Laver and Fraser returned to being teammates to beat Italy in the Davis Cup finals in December of 1960. Laver failed to defend his Australian championship in 1961, losing in the finals, as he did at Forest Hills, as

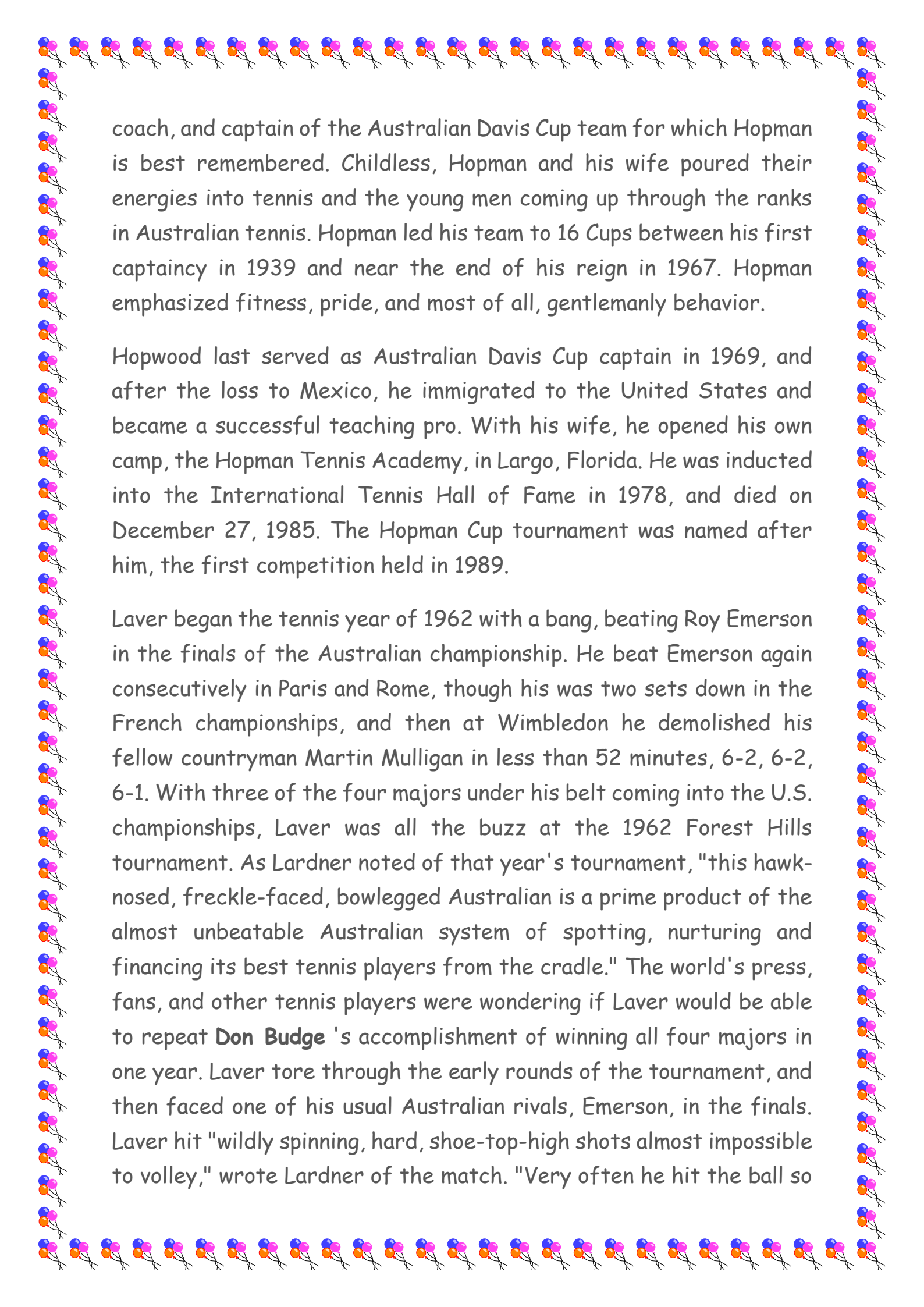
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well. But he was more successful at Wimbledon, defeating his American opponent, Chuck McKinley, in a mere 55 minutes. Following the matches at Forest Hills that year, the former player and now organizer of professional tennis, Jack Kramer, offered Laver \$33,600 to come on his pro tour, but the Aussie refused. He had his sights still set on the Grand Slam tournaments to which he would be barred if he turned pro.

### **Tennis Player/Coach Harry Hopman**

Harry Hopman's name is synonymous with Australian tennis in the two decades prior to the Open era. As captain of the Australian Davis Cup team from 1950 to 1969, he gathered a group of players around him who he groomed in the finest aspects of the gentlemanly game of tennis. Called Hop by his friends, his "genius," according to E. Digby Baltzell in *Sporting Gentlemen: Men's Tennis from the Age of Honor to the Cult of the Superstar*, "was to take a wide variety of boys and mold them into a cohesive team of gentlemen.... Harry Hopman was a great organizer, disciplinarian, and believer in the virtues of the gentleman." Among the players he groomed were Frank Sedgman, Ken McGregor, Lew Hoad, Kenny Rosewall, Mal Anderson, Ashley Cooper, Neale Fraser, Roy Emerson, John Newcombe, Fred Stolle, Tony Roche, and most famously of all, Rod Laver. He gave his name to a tennis epoch, the Hopman Era, the decades in the 1950s and 1960s when the Australians dominated amateur tennis.

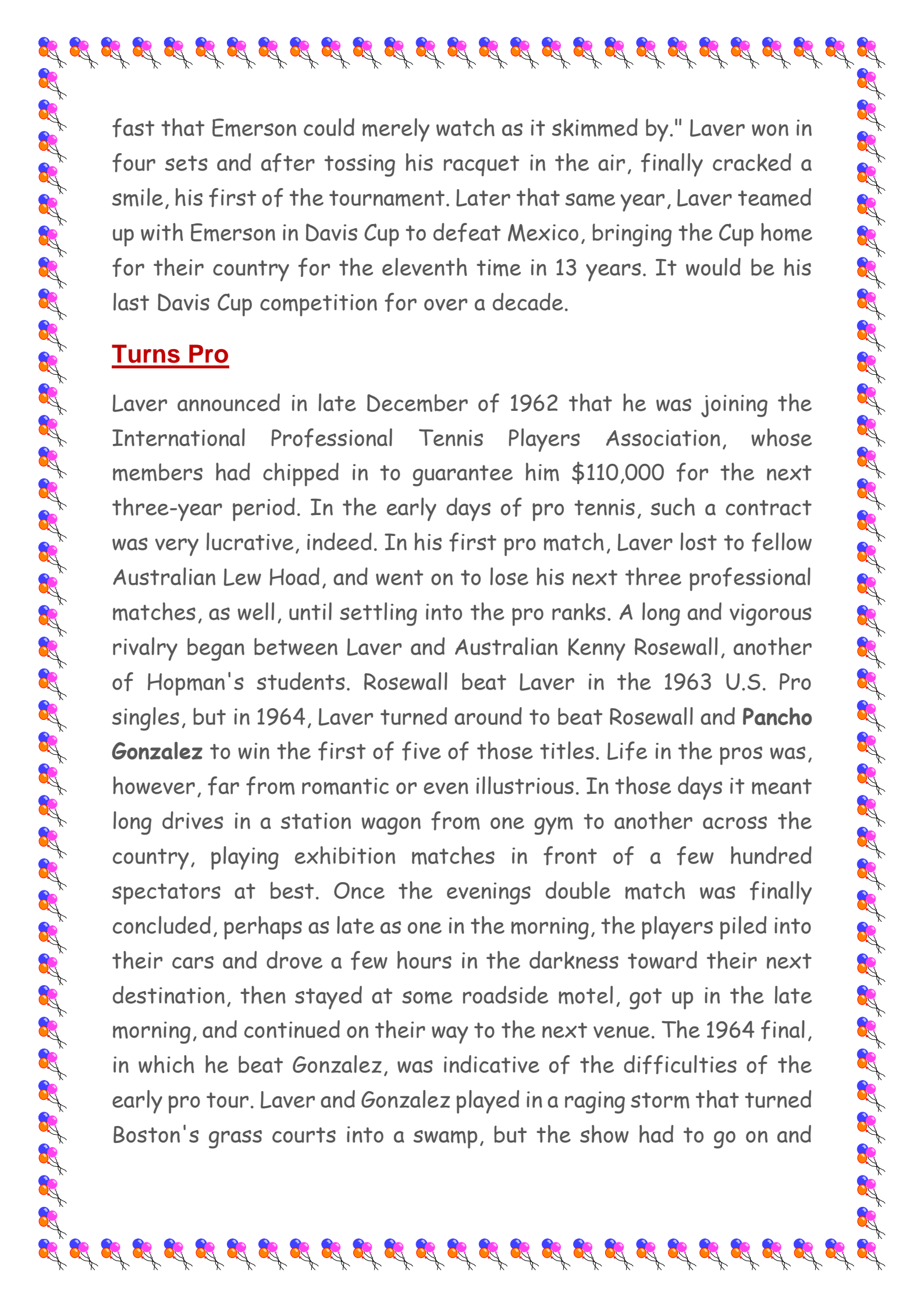
Born August 12, 1906, in Glebe, New South Wales, Hopman played tennis himself, and was a singles finalist in the Australian championships in the early 1930s. He was also a fine doubles player, winning the Australian doubles in 1929 and 1930, and twice a runner-up in the French doubles title. He and his wife, Nell, won the Australian mixed doubles twice. However it was as a talent spotter,

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coach, and captain of the Australian Davis Cup team for which Hopman is best remembered. Childless, Hopman and his wife poured their energies into tennis and the young men coming up through the ranks in Australian tennis. Hopman led his team to 16 Cups between his first captaincy in 1939 and near the end of his reign in 1967. Hopman emphasized fitness, pride, and most of all, gentlemanly behavior.

Hopwood last served as Australian Davis Cup captain in 1969, and after the loss to Mexico, he immigrated to the United States and became a successful teaching pro. With his wife, he opened his own camp, the Hopman Tennis Academy, in Largo, Florida. He was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1978, and died on December 27, 1985. The Hopman Cup tournament was named after him, the first competition held in 1989.

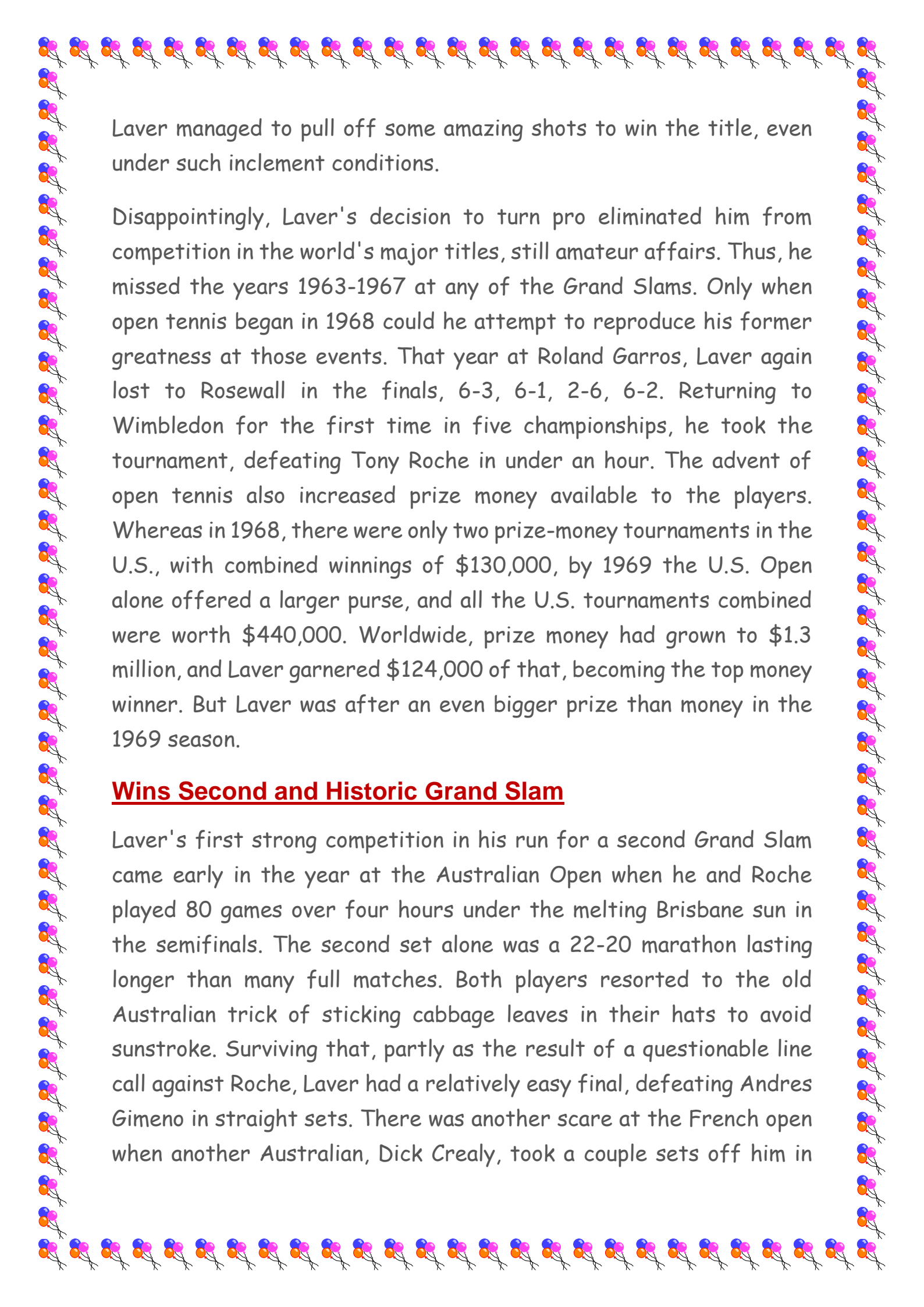
Laver began the tennis year of 1962 with a bang, beating Roy Emerson in the finals of the Australian championship. He beat Emerson again consecutively in Paris and Rome, though he was two sets down in the French championships, and then at Wimbledon he demolished his fellow countryman Martin Mulligan in less than 52 minutes, 6-2, 6-2, 6-1. With three of the four majors under his belt coming into the U.S. championships, Laver was all the buzz at the 1962 Forest Hills tournament. As Lardner noted of that year's tournament, "this hawk-nosed, freckle-faced, bowlegged Australian is a prime product of the almost unbeatable Australian system of spotting, nurturing and financing its best tennis players from the cradle." The world's press, fans, and other tennis players were wondering if Laver would be able to repeat **Don Budge**'s accomplishment of winning all four majors in one year. Laver tore through the early rounds of the tournament, and then faced one of his usual Australian rivals, Emerson, in the finals. Laver hit "wildly spinning, hard, shoe-top-high shots almost impossible to volley," wrote Lardner of the match. "Very often he hit the ball so



fast that Emerson could merely watch as it skimmed by." Laver won in four sets and after tossing his racquet in the air, finally cracked a smile, his first of the tournament. Later that same year, Laver teamed up with Emerson in Davis Cup to defeat Mexico, bringing the Cup home for their country for the eleventh time in 13 years. It would be his last Davis Cup competition for over a decade.

### Turns Pro

Laver announced in late December of 1962 that he was joining the International Professional Tennis Players Association, whose members had chipped in to guarantee him \$110,000 for the next three-year period. In the early days of pro tennis, such a contract was very lucrative, indeed. In his first pro match, Laver lost to fellow Australian Lew Hoad, and went on to lose his next three professional matches, as well, until settling into the pro ranks. A long and vigorous rivalry began between Laver and Australian Kenny Rosewall, another of Hopman's students. Rosewall beat Laver in the 1963 U.S. Pro singles, but in 1964, Laver turned around to beat Rosewall and **Pancho Gonzalez** to win the first of five of those titles. Life in the pros was, however, far from romantic or even illustrious. In those days it meant long drives in a station wagon from one gym to another across the country, playing exhibition matches in front of a few hundred spectators at best. Once the evenings double match was finally concluded, perhaps as late as one in the morning, the players piled into their cars and drove a few hours in the darkness toward their next destination, then stayed at some roadside motel, got up in the late morning, and continued on their way to the next venue. The 1964 final, in which he beat Gonzalez, was indicative of the difficulties of the early pro tour. Laver and Gonzalez played in a raging storm that turned Boston's grass courts into a swamp, but the show had to go on and

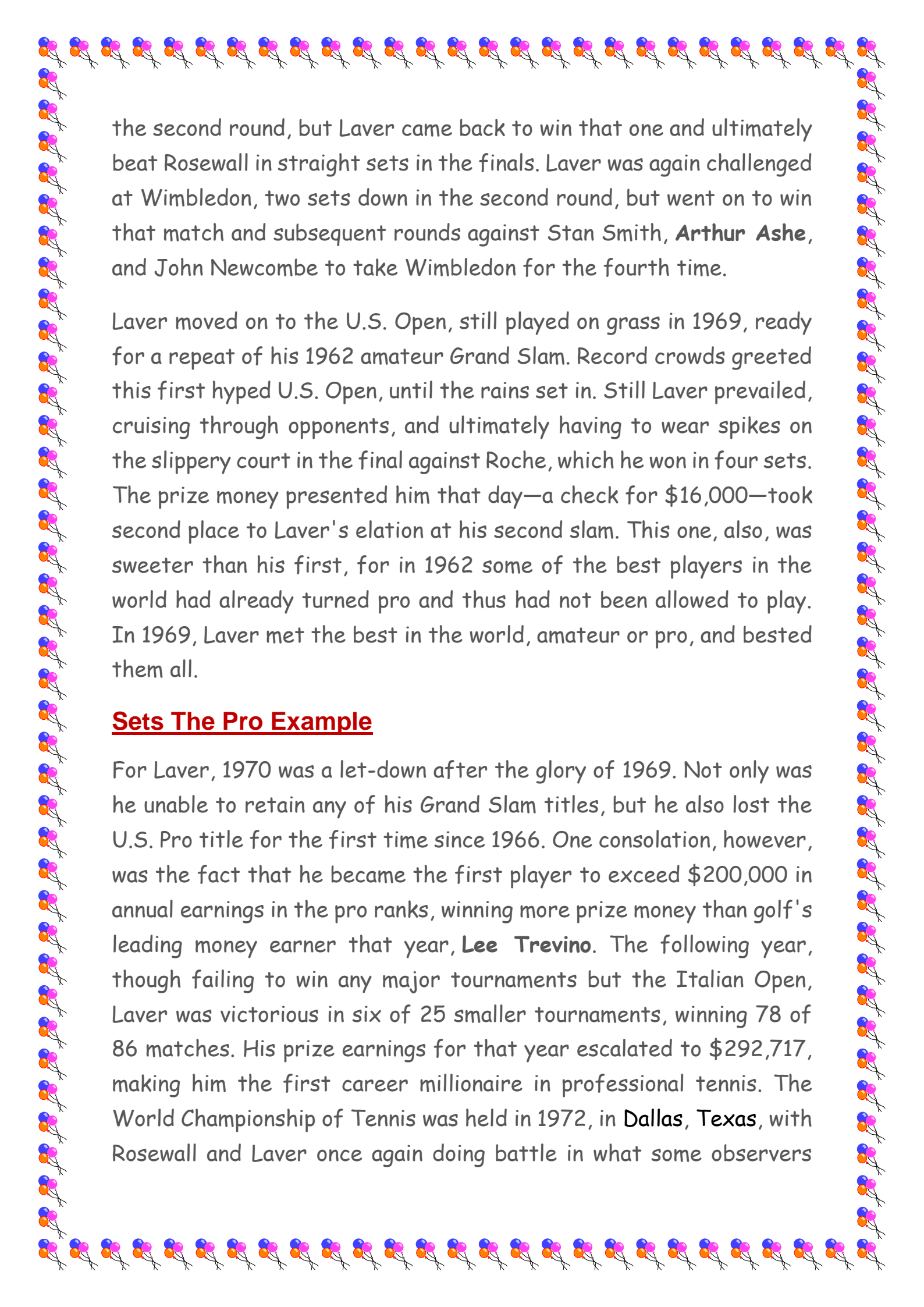
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Laver managed to pull off some amazing shots to win the title, even under such inclement conditions.

Disappointingly, Laver's decision to turn pro eliminated him from competition in the world's major titles, still amateur affairs. Thus, he missed the years 1963-1967 at any of the Grand Slams. Only when open tennis began in 1968 could he attempt to reproduce his former greatness at those events. That year at Roland Garros, Laver again lost to Rosewall in the finals, 6-3, 6-1, 2-6, 6-2. Returning to Wimbledon for the first time in five championships, he took the tournament, defeating Tony Roche in under an hour. The advent of open tennis also increased prize money available to the players. Whereas in 1968, there were only two prize-money tournaments in the U.S., with combined winnings of \$130,000, by 1969 the U.S. Open alone offered a larger purse, and all the U.S. tournaments combined were worth \$440,000. Worldwide, prize money had grown to \$1.3 million, and Laver garnered \$124,000 of that, becoming the top money winner. But Laver was after an even bigger prize than money in the 1969 season.

### **Wins Second and Historic Grand Slam**

Laver's first strong competition in his run for a second Grand Slam came early in the year at the Australian Open when he and Roche played 80 games over four hours under the melting Brisbane sun in the semifinals. The second set alone was a 22-20 marathon lasting longer than many full matches. Both players resorted to the old Australian trick of sticking cabbage leaves in their hats to avoid sunstroke. Surviving that, partly as the result of a questionable line call against Roche, Laver had a relatively easy final, defeating Andres Gimeno in straight sets. There was another scare at the French open when another Australian, Dick Crealy, took a couple sets off him in

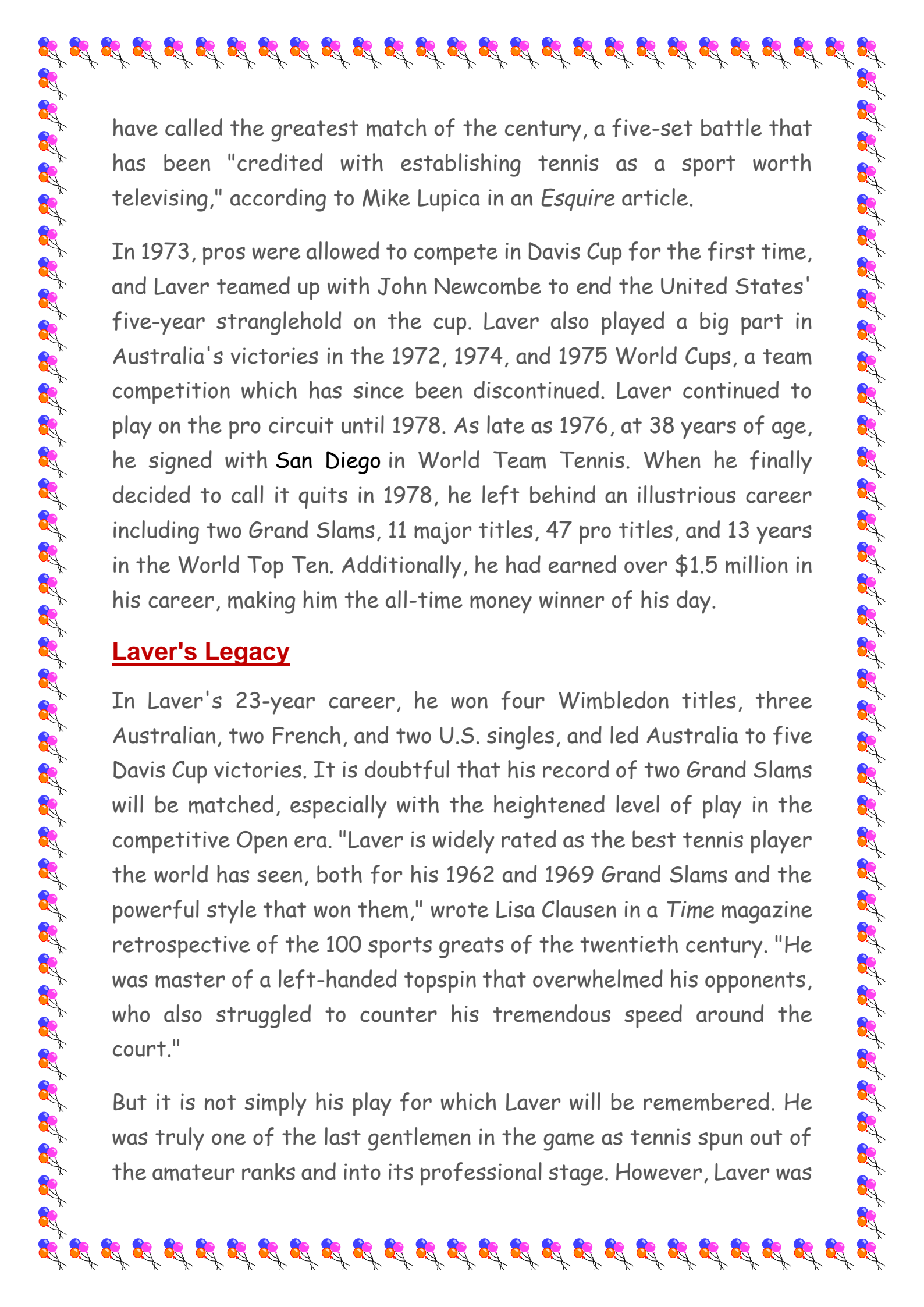
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the second round, but Laver came back to win that one and ultimately beat Rosewall in straight sets in the finals. Laver was again challenged at Wimbledon, two sets down in the second round, but went on to win that match and subsequent rounds against Stan Smith, **Arthur Ashe**, and John Newcombe to take Wimbledon for the fourth time.

Laver moved on to the U.S. Open, still played on grass in 1969, ready for a repeat of his 1962 amateur Grand Slam. Record crowds greeted this first hyped U.S. Open, until the rains set in. Still Laver prevailed, cruising through opponents, and ultimately having to wear spikes on the slippery court in the final against Roche, which he won in four sets. The prize money presented him that day—a check for \$16,000—took second place to Laver's elation at his second slam. This one, also, was sweeter than his first, for in 1962 some of the best players in the world had already turned pro and thus had not been allowed to play. In 1969, Laver met the best in the world, amateur or pro, and bested them all.

### Sets The Pro Example

For Laver, 1970 was a let-down after the glory of 1969. Not only was he unable to retain any of his Grand Slam titles, but he also lost the U.S. Pro title for the first time since 1966. One consolation, however, was the fact that he became the first player to exceed \$200,000 in annual earnings in the pro ranks, winning more prize money than golf's leading money earner that year, **Lee Trevino**. The following year, though failing to win any major tournaments but the Italian Open, Laver was victorious in six of 25 smaller tournaments, winning 78 of 86 matches. His prize earnings for that year escalated to \$292,717, making him the first career millionaire in professional tennis. The World Championship of Tennis was held in 1972, in **Dallas, Texas**, with Rosewall and Laver once again doing battle in what some observers

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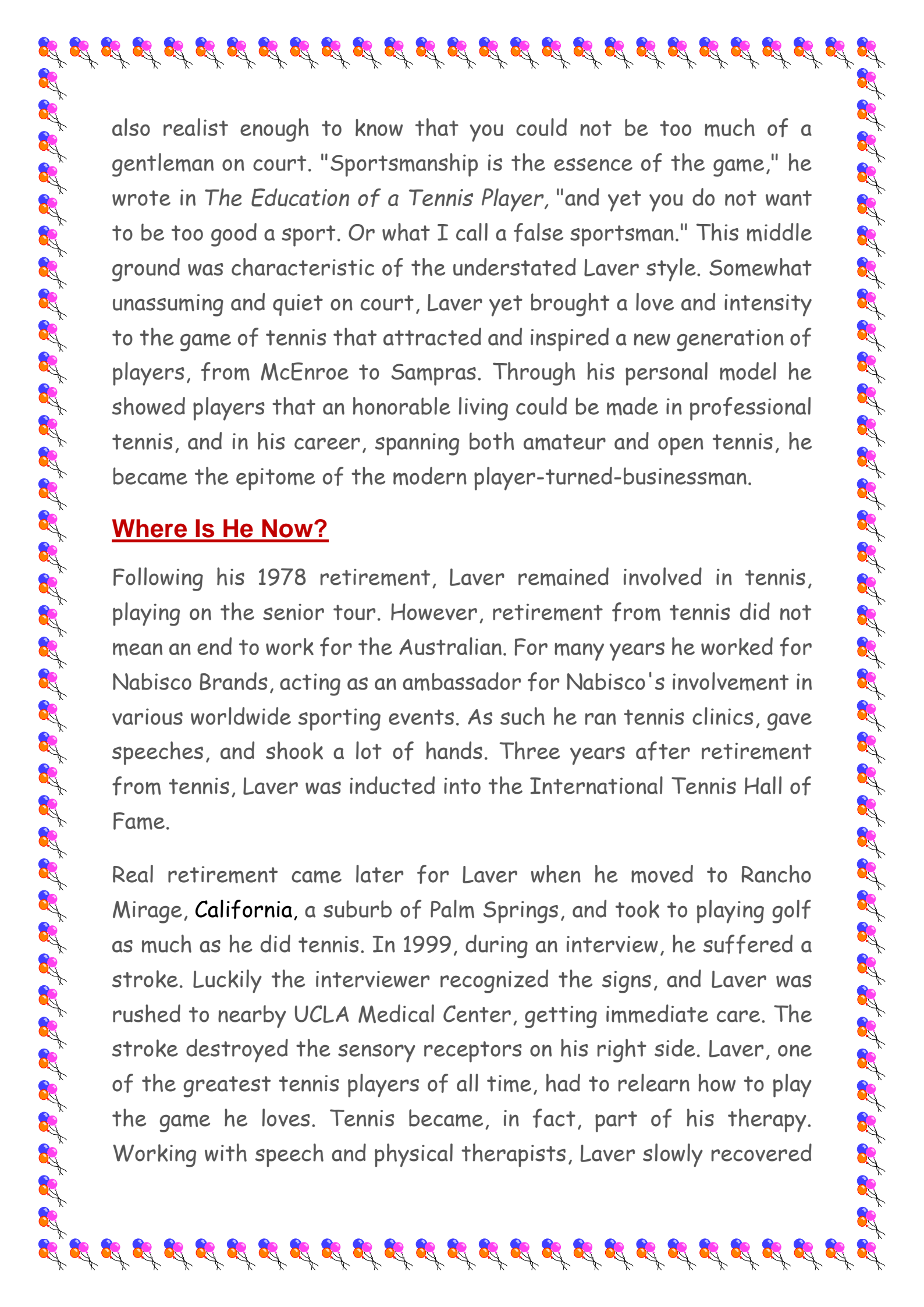
have called the greatest match of the century, a five-set battle that has been "credited with establishing tennis as a sport worth televising," according to Mike Lupica in an *Esquire* article.

In 1973, pros were allowed to compete in Davis Cup for the first time, and Laver teamed up with John Newcombe to end the United States' five-year stranglehold on the cup. Laver also played a big part in Australia's victories in the 1972, 1974, and 1975 World Cups, a team competition which has since been discontinued. Laver continued to play on the pro circuit until 1978. As late as 1976, at 38 years of age, he signed with San Diego in World Team Tennis. When he finally decided to call it quits in 1978, he left behind an illustrious career including two Grand Slams, 11 major titles, 47 pro titles, and 13 years in the World Top Ten. Additionally, he had earned over \$1.5 million in his career, making him the all-time money winner of his day.

### **Laver's Legacy**

In Laver's 23-year career, he won four Wimbledon titles, three Australian, two French, and two U.S. singles, and led Australia to five Davis Cup victories. It is doubtful that his record of two Grand Slams will be matched, especially with the heightened level of play in the competitive Open era. "Laver is widely rated as the best tennis player the world has seen, both for his 1962 and 1969 Grand Slams and the powerful style that won them," wrote Lisa Clausen in a *Time* magazine retrospective of the 100 sports greats of the twentieth century. "He was master of a left-handed topspin that overwhelmed his opponents, who also struggled to counter his tremendous speed around the court."

But it is not simply his play for which Laver will be remembered. He was truly one of the last gentlemen in the game as tennis spun out of the amateur ranks and into its professional stage. However, Laver was

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also realist enough to know that you could not be too much of a gentleman on court. "Sportsmanship is the essence of the game," he wrote in *The Education of a Tennis Player*, "and yet you do not want to be too good a sport. Or what I call a false sportsman." This middle ground was characteristic of the understated Laver style. Somewhat unassuming and quiet on court, Laver yet brought a love and intensity to the game of tennis that attracted and inspired a new generation of players, from McEnroe to Sampras. Through his personal model he showed players that an honorable living could be made in professional tennis, and in his career, spanning both amateur and open tennis, he became the epitome of the modern player-turned-businessman.

### **Where Is He Now?**

Following his 1978 retirement, Laver remained involved in tennis, playing on the senior tour. However, retirement from tennis did not mean an end to work for the Australian. For many years he worked for Nabisco Brands, acting as an ambassador for Nabisco's involvement in various worldwide sporting events. As such he ran tennis clinics, gave speeches, and shook a lot of hands. Three years after retirement from tennis, Laver was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Real retirement came later for Laver when he moved to Rancho Mirage, California, a suburb of Palm Springs, and took to playing golf as much as he did tennis. In 1999, during an interview, he suffered a stroke. Luckily the interviewer recognized the signs, and Laver was rushed to nearby UCLA Medical Center, getting immediate care. The stroke destroyed the sensory receptors on his right side. Laver, one of the greatest tennis players of all time, had to relearn how to play the game he loves. Tennis became, in fact, part of his therapy. Working with speech and physical therapists, Laver slowly recovered

his speech and movement. "I still have a little way to go," Laver told a reporter for *Sports Illustrated*, "but I'm very happy with my performance. I feel I'm going to get all the way back." In 2000, Laver was honored by his native Australia when its tennis federation named center court at Melbourne Park, home of the Australian Open, after him. On hand for the naming ceremony, Laver said, "I am delighted to accept this wonderful honor. This is a crowning achievement to my tennis career."

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**02]** <https://www.tennisfame.com/hall-of-famers/inductees/rod-laver>

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To choose just one moment to celebrate in Rod Laver's glorious career is near impossible. The Rockhampton-born "Rocket" is, after all, feted as the winner of an unmatched 200 tournaments, and twice a winner of the coveted calendar-year Grand Slam.

# Evolution of Tennis Rackets

The very first tennis racket was made in 1874 in London by Major Walter C. Wingfield. The racket was the first one made of solid wood.

<https://youtu.be/6hj6bxtugMo>



Major Walter C. Wingfield and his wooden racket

## Introduction

Tennis rackets were invented in the middle of the 18th century. Monks in France created a very similar game to tennis, but they didn't use rackets. The monks started out using their bare hands to hit the ball back and forth over something similar to a net, but then it shifted into the monks wearing leather gloves.

After the monks started getting injured from playing with their hands, they decided to shift to paddles. Players first used solid wooden paddles, and then that transferred to what we would now call a racket in the 14th century. This early medieval racket had strings made of gut and was bound in a large wooden frame. They were shaped in more of a teardrop shape, with a long wooden handle. They were used to hit a dead ball over a net-type structure instead of against a wall as played initially with a squash ball.

The modern wooden tennis racket was invented several centuries later, and the game started to shift more into what we know tennis to look like today.

## Wooden Rackets

The very first tennis racket was made in 1874 in London by Major Walter C. Wingfield. This racket was large, heavy, and made of solid wood, meaning it could deal some severe damage!

Wooden rackets started to be used in the middle of the nineteenth century when lawn tennis was invented and gained popularity.

The wooden rackets used in this period were created with a wide head so that it was easier to use the ball, but the rackets were also relatively heavy. However, they were flexible, and this allowed for a fair playing field for everyone who ended up playing the game.

The wooden racket stayed mostly the same for about 100 years! Excluding laminated wooden rackets, which started to gain popularity in 1947. This was a game-changer for many players.

Dunlop, Slazenger, Wilson, and Spalding all dominated the wooden tennis racket industry. Most other competitors died out during this era due to their lack of innovation and established big companies.

The two biggest tennis rackets of this time were the Dunlop Maxply Fort and the Wilson Jack Kramer.

## Metal

Throughout the century that wooden rackets were used, metal rackets repeatedly tried to gain popularity without being successful. Metal rackets had been around since 1889 but never saw widespread use.



However, in the 1970s, Jimmy Connors used a now-famous steel racket that showed off just how powerful metal rackets could be against wooden ones.

Connors' devastating victory against Ken Rosewell was proof that the metal tennis racket industry had taken off. The heads were twice the size of the wooden tennis racket heads traditionally used in the century prior.

The metal rackets started in 1957 when René Lacoste invented and patented the first metal tennis racket for use.

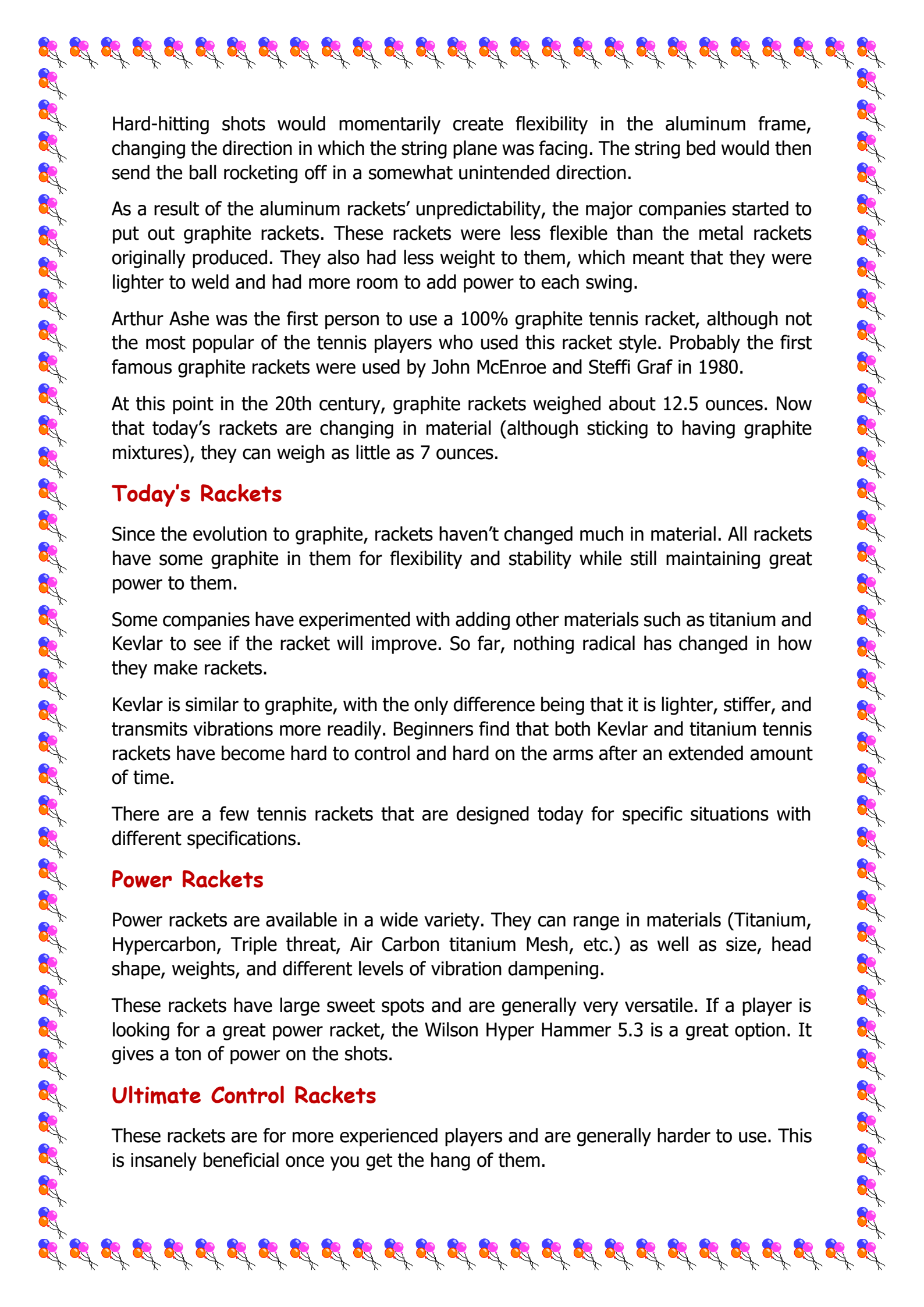
Wilson (the famous tennis racket company) eventually bought the rights to it, and so the metal racket made its first appearance in a Wilson catalogue in 1969.

The first Wilson metal racket, the T2000, was unlike any wood racket at the time. It had a 67 square inch head, which allowed for maximum power.

By 1917, Wilson (who had been making wooden rackets since 1917) was fully composite and metal materials in their catalogues.

## Graphite

Aluminum rackets had taken off after gaining in popularity during Connors' time, but players soon grew weary of the flexibility that these rackets posed on the court.

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Hard-hitting shots would momentarily create flexibility in the aluminum frame, changing the direction in which the string plane was facing. The string bed would then send the ball rocketing off in a somewhat unintended direction.

As a result of the aluminum rackets' unpredictability, the major companies started to put out graphite rackets. These rackets were less flexible than the metal rackets originally produced. They also had less weight to them, which meant that they were lighter to wield and had more room to add power to each swing.

Arthur Ashe was the first person to use a 100% graphite tennis racket, although not the most popular of the tennis players who used this racket style. Probably the first famous graphite rackets were used by John McEnroe and Steffi Graf in 1980.

At this point in the 20th century, graphite rackets weighed about 12.5 ounces. Now that today's rackets are changing in material (although sticking to having graphite mixtures), they can weigh as little as 7 ounces.

## **Today's Rackets**

Since the evolution to graphite, rackets haven't changed much in material. All rackets have some graphite in them for flexibility and stability while still maintaining great power to them.

Some companies have experimented with adding other materials such as titanium and Kevlar to see if the racket will improve. So far, nothing radical has changed in how they make rackets.

Kevlar is similar to graphite, with the only difference being that it is lighter, stiffer, and transmits vibrations more readily. Beginners find that both Kevlar and titanium tennis rackets have become hard to control and hard on the arms after an extended amount of time.

There are a few tennis rackets that are designed today for specific situations with different specifications.

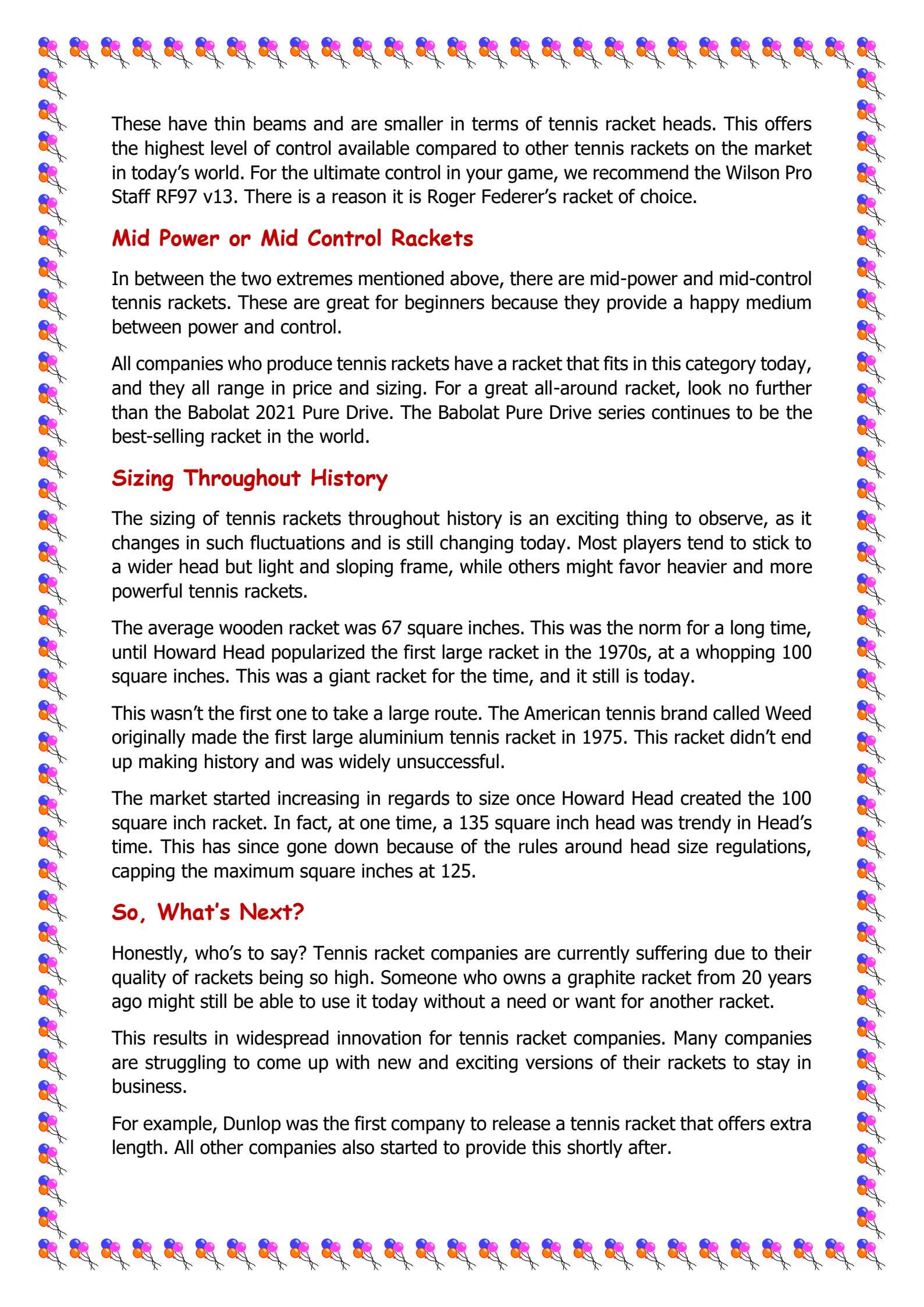
## **Power Rackets**

Power rackets are available in a wide variety. They can range in materials (Titanium, Hypercarbon, Triple threat, Air Carbon titanium Mesh, etc.) as well as size, head shape, weights, and different levels of vibration dampening.

These rackets have large sweet spots and are generally very versatile. If a player is looking for a great power racket, the Wilson Hyper Hammer 5.3 is a great option. It gives a ton of power on the shots.

## **Ultimate Control Rackets**

These rackets are for more experienced players and are generally harder to use. This is insanely beneficial once you get the hang of them.



These have thin beams and are smaller in terms of tennis racket heads. This offers the highest level of control available compared to other tennis rackets on the market in today's world. For the ultimate control in your game, we recommend the Wilson Pro Staff RF97 v13. There is a reason it is Roger Federer's racket of choice.

### **Mid Power or Mid Control Rackets**

In between the two extremes mentioned above, there are mid-power and mid-control tennis rackets. These are great for beginners because they provide a happy medium between power and control.

All companies who produce tennis rackets have a racket that fits in this category today, and they all range in price and sizing. For a great all-around racket, look no further than the Babolat 2021 Pure Drive. The Babolat Pure Drive series continues to be the best-selling racket in the world.

### **Sizing Throughout History**

The sizing of tennis rackets throughout history is an exciting thing to observe, as it changes in such fluctuations and is still changing today. Most players tend to stick to a wider head but light and sloping frame, while others might favor heavier and more powerful tennis rackets.

The average wooden racket was 67 square inches. This was the norm for a long time, until Howard Head popularized the first large racket in the 1970s, at a whopping 100 square inches. This was a giant racket for the time, and it still is today.

This wasn't the first one to take a large route. The American tennis brand called Weed originally made the first large aluminium tennis racket in 1975. This racket didn't end up making history and was widely unsuccessful.

The market started increasing in regards to size once Howard Head created the 100 square inch racket. In fact, at one time, a 135 square inch head was trendy in Head's time. This has since gone down because of the rules around head size regulations, capping the maximum square inches at 125.

### **So, What's Next?**

Honestly, who's to say? Tennis racket companies are currently suffering due to their quality of rackets being so high. Someone who owns a graphite racket from 20 years ago might still be able to use it today without a need or want for another racket.

This results in widespread innovation for tennis racket companies. Many companies are struggling to come up with new and exciting versions of their rackets to stay in business.

For example, Dunlop was the first company to release a tennis racket that offers extra length. All other companies also started to provide this shortly after.

Head has recently come out with a piezoelectric material tennis racket, which allows the user to have a better hit. When the ball comes into contact with the strings (made of piezoelectric material), the energy that it creates is converted into electrical energy to dampen the vibration.

This electric energy is then back to the piezoelectric ceramic composites in the frame, which then stiffens from the energy entering it. So, is electricity in tennis rackets the next big thing? We'll have to wait and see. Either way, at least we aren't playing with animal guts!

**To know about the Best Tennis Rackets in 2022,  
please visit these web page:**

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# *1969 = Laver's Miracle Year*

*Rod Laver looks back 50 years*

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*Rod Laver recollects the memory of his experience of  
1969, his miracle year, when he achieved the SECOND  
Calendar Grand Slam in the history of Tennis  
in the 20<sup>th</sup> century!*

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In the **First** of a four-part series this year, Rod Laver looks back 50 years to the **1969 Australian Open**, the first step to his historic second Grand Slam.

**Source:**

<https://www.atptour.com/en/news/laver-1969-grand-slam-australian-open-feature>

Rod Laver's first steps to immortality in competition 'open' to amateur and professionals, 50 seasons ago, saw the 30-year-old travel from his California home and back to Queensland for the first time in three years, to see his mother and father, who was aged 70. The first 48-player, eight-day Australian Open was set to be held — for the seventh, and final time — on the Milton grass courts in Brisbane's Frew Park, boasting a 7,000-seater stadium. “I’d beaten Neale Fraser to win the 1960 Australian Open in Brisbane, to become the first Queenslander champion,” remembers Laver, 50 years on. “The courts were patchy and bad bouncing; the pavilion was just as I’d remembered it as a kid. It was one of the most dispiriting tournaments I’d ever played in, as the humidity was intense and the seedings were odd — facing Emerson [the 1963-67 champion] and Fred Stolle so early on.

“Having won the Wimbledon title in 1968, I’d told my wife, Mary, towards the end of the season that I wanted to play all four of the major championships the following year. She agreed, ‘Go ahead, it’s your life with tennis.’ Completing another Grand Slam, after six years in the wilderness as a pro, was already on my mind when I arrived in Brisbane. With a cortisone injection in my left elbow, a product of going for a ball and falling on my left wrist in Boston in June 1968, I started against Massimo Di Domenico in the second round. Before every match I needed to wrap my elbow in a canvas pad for 20 minutes, then I iced it after each match.

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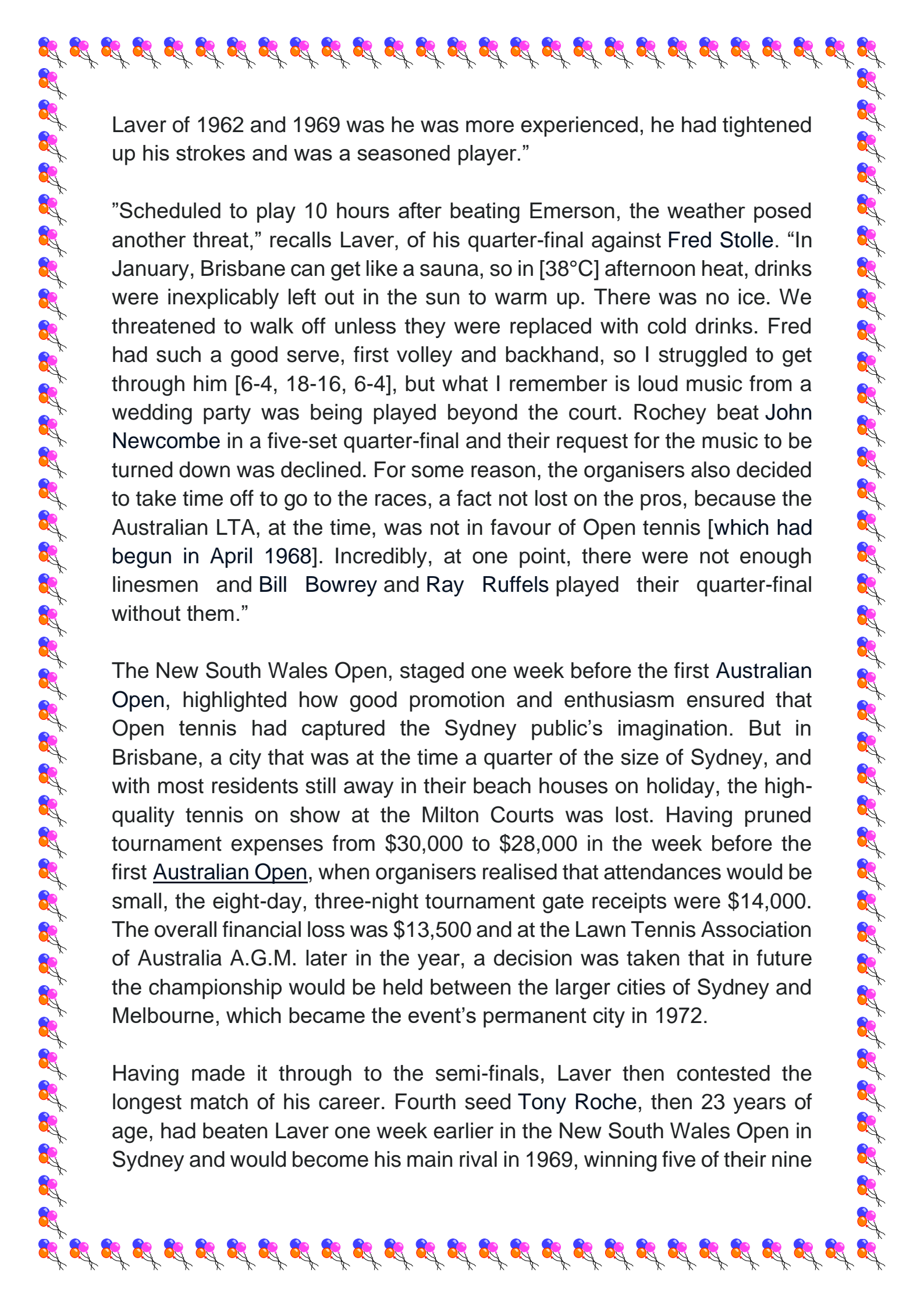
Right from the start, the January heat in Brisbane was excessive and the humidity was oppressive.”

Di Domenico, who joined four other Italian players — Vittorio Crotta, Pietro Marzano, Adriano Panatta and Piero Toci — on the tour of Australia and New Zealand, told ATPTour.com, “I remember walking with Rod along the tunnel leading to the Centre Court and being quite nervous. Rod was very friendly and talkative, which relaxed me a bit. I played reasonably well, although I lost 6-2, 6-2, 6-3, but Rod was always complimentary when I played a good shot. After the match, Rod asked me to practice with him in the following days, but with my English not being very good, Martin Mulligan, as our coach, stepped in to help fix the agreement.”

Then came No. 11 seed Emerson, the five-time defending champion, who would partner Laver to the doubles title later in the week. In their 31 matches between 1958 and 1962, the pair had met at seven major championships. “Playing Rod was always tough,” Emerson told ATPTour.com. “Harry Hopman [the long-time Davis Cup coach and captain] placed such great emphasis on Australians playing together that we always practised together and partnered up in doubles, so there were no surprises in new strokes or tactics. It all came down to a matter of points, a ball hitting a line or not. I was two years older than Rod and, over the course of our long careers in the amateur and pro games, we played over 70 times. I liked playing against left-handers, having partnered Neale Fraser, who was a great player, in 1959.

“Rod didn’t have the biggest serve of all time, and players used to target his second serve a lot. He was a slow starter too, so often I attempted to get off to the best possible start, but once he found his range and rhythm later in a match there was no stopping some of his groundstrokes, particularly in the best-of-five sets format that we regularly played.”

Laver remembers, “The match started at 9 p.m. and could have gone on to 2 a.m.! Emmo served at 7-6 in the fourth set, but I eventually won [6-2, 6-4, 3-6, 9-7].” Emerson, who captured the first two major singles championships of 1963 and 1967, adds, “The biggest difference between

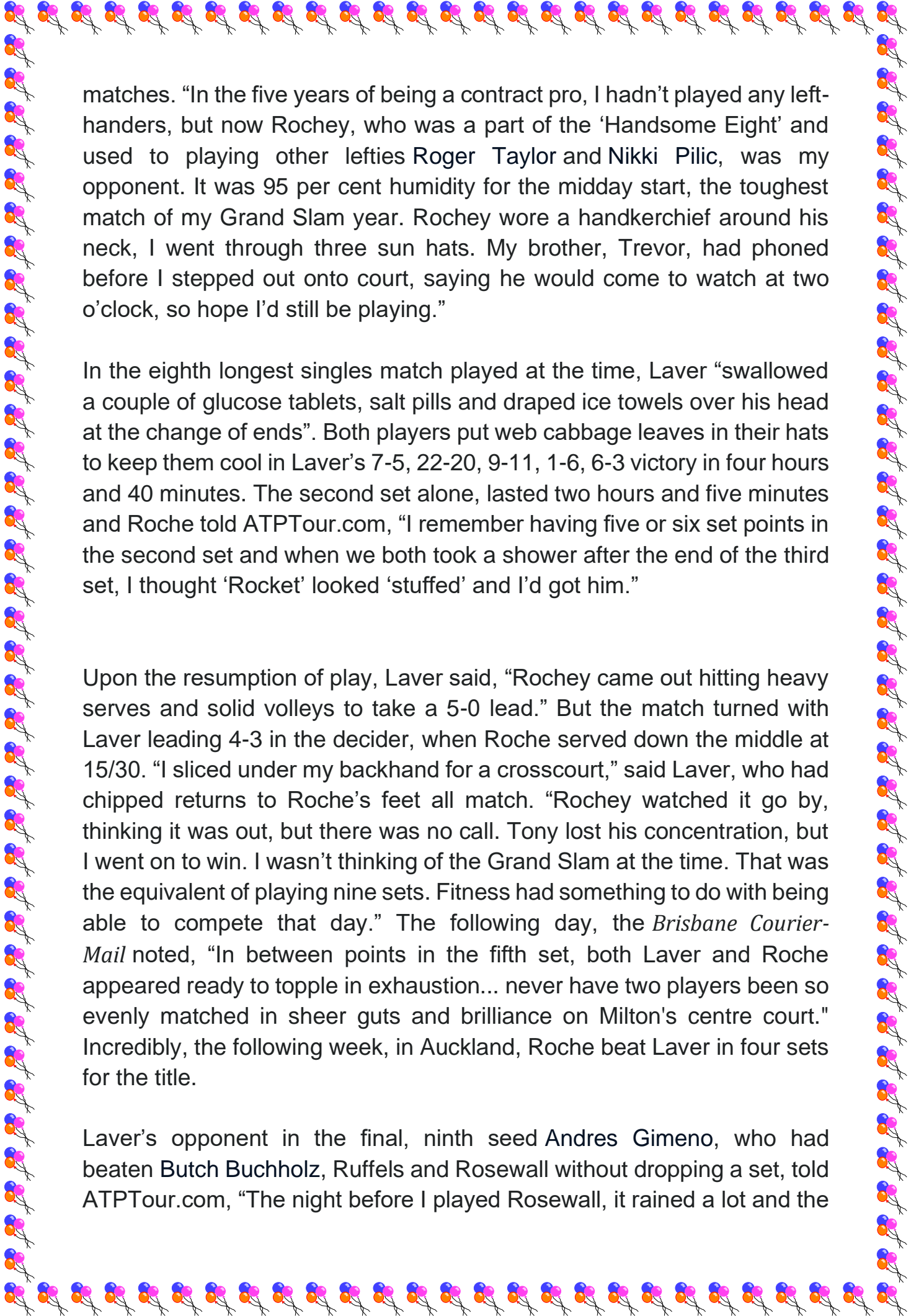


Laver of 1962 and 1969 was he was more experienced, he had tightened up his strokes and was a seasoned player.”

”Scheduled to play 10 hours after beating Emerson, the weather posed another threat,” recalls Laver, of his quarter-final against Fred Stolle. “In January, Brisbane can get like a sauna, so in [38°C] afternoon heat, drinks were inexplicably left out in the sun to warm up. There was no ice. We threatened to walk off unless they were replaced with cold drinks. Fred had such a good serve, first volley and backhand, so I struggled to get through him [6-4, 18-16, 6-4], but what I remember is loud music from a wedding party was being played beyond the court. Roche beat John Newcombe in a five-set quarter-final and their request for the music to be turned down was declined. For some reason, the organisers also decided to take time off to go to the races, a fact not lost on the pros, because the Australian LTA, at the time, was not in favour of Open tennis [which had begun in April 1968]. Incredibly, at one point, there were not enough linesmen and Bill Bowrey and Ray Ruffels played their quarter-final without them.”

The New South Wales Open, staged one week before the first Australian Open, highlighted how good promotion and enthusiasm ensured that Open tennis had captured the Sydney public’s imagination. But in Brisbane, a city that was at the time a quarter of the size of Sydney, and with most residents still away in their beach houses on holiday, the high-quality tennis on show at the Milton Courts was lost. Having pruned tournament expenses from \$30,000 to \$28,000 in the week before the first Australian Open, when organisers realised that attendances would be small, the eight-day, three-night tournament gate receipts were \$14,000. The overall financial loss was \$13,500 and at the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia A.G.M. later in the year, a decision was taken that in future the championship would be held between the larger cities of Sydney and Melbourne, which became the event’s permanent city in 1972.

Having made it through to the semi-finals, Laver then contested the longest match of his career. Fourth seed Tony Roche, then 23 years of age, had beaten Laver one week earlier in the New South Wales Open in Sydney and would become his main rival in 1969, winning five of their nine



matches. "In the five years of being a contract pro, I hadn't played any left-handers, but now Rochey, who was a part of the 'Handsome Eight' and used to playing other lefties Roger Taylor and Nikki Pilic, was my opponent. It was 95 per cent humidity for the midday start, the toughest match of my Grand Slam year. Rochey wore a handkerchief around his neck, I went through three sun hats. My brother, Trevor, had phoned before I stepped out onto court, saying he would come to watch at two o'clock, so hope I'd still be playing."

In the eighth longest singles match played at the time, Laver "swallowed a couple of glucose tablets, salt pills and draped ice towels over his head at the change of ends". Both players put web cabbage leaves in their hats to keep them cool in Laver's 7-5, 22-20, 9-11, 1-6, 6-3 victory in four hours and 40 minutes. The second set alone, lasted two hours and five minutes and Roche told ATPTour.com, "I remember having five or six set points in the second set and when we both took a shower after the end of the third set, I thought 'Rocket' looked 'stuffed' and I'd got him."

Upon the resumption of play, Laver said, "Rochey came out hitting heavy serves and solid volleys to take a 5-0 lead." But the match turned with Laver leading 4-3 in the decider, when Roche served down the middle at 15/30. "I sliced under my backhand for a crosscourt," said Laver, who had chipped returns to Roche's feet all match. "Rochey watched it go by, thinking it was out, but there was no call. Tony lost his concentration, but I went on to win. I wasn't thinking of the Grand Slam at the time. That was the equivalent of playing nine sets. Fitness had something to do with being able to compete that day." The following day, the *Brisbane Courier-Mail* noted, "In between points in the fifth set, both Laver and Roche appeared ready to topple in exhaustion... never have two players been so evenly matched in sheer guts and brilliance on Milton's centre court." Incredibly, the following week, in Auckland, Roche beat Laver in four sets for the title.

Laver's opponent in the final, ninth seed Andres Gimeno, who had beaten Butch Buchholz, Ruffels and Rosewall without dropping a set, told ATPTour.com, "The night before I played Rosewall, it rained a lot and the

court was very slippery. I wore spikes and played very well, but Ken was wearing normal shoes and was sliding a lot. I played well in the other matches, but in the final, Rod played too good!" Laver, who'd soaked for hours in a baking-soda bath in his motel room after his victory over Roche, remembers, "My troublesome left elbow held up, but Gimeno lacked energy in the final. He was an artist, in placing and stroking the ball without a lot of heavy top spin. But he didn't take his chances to break in the third set." Laver won 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 for his third Australian crown and collected the \$4,500 first prize.

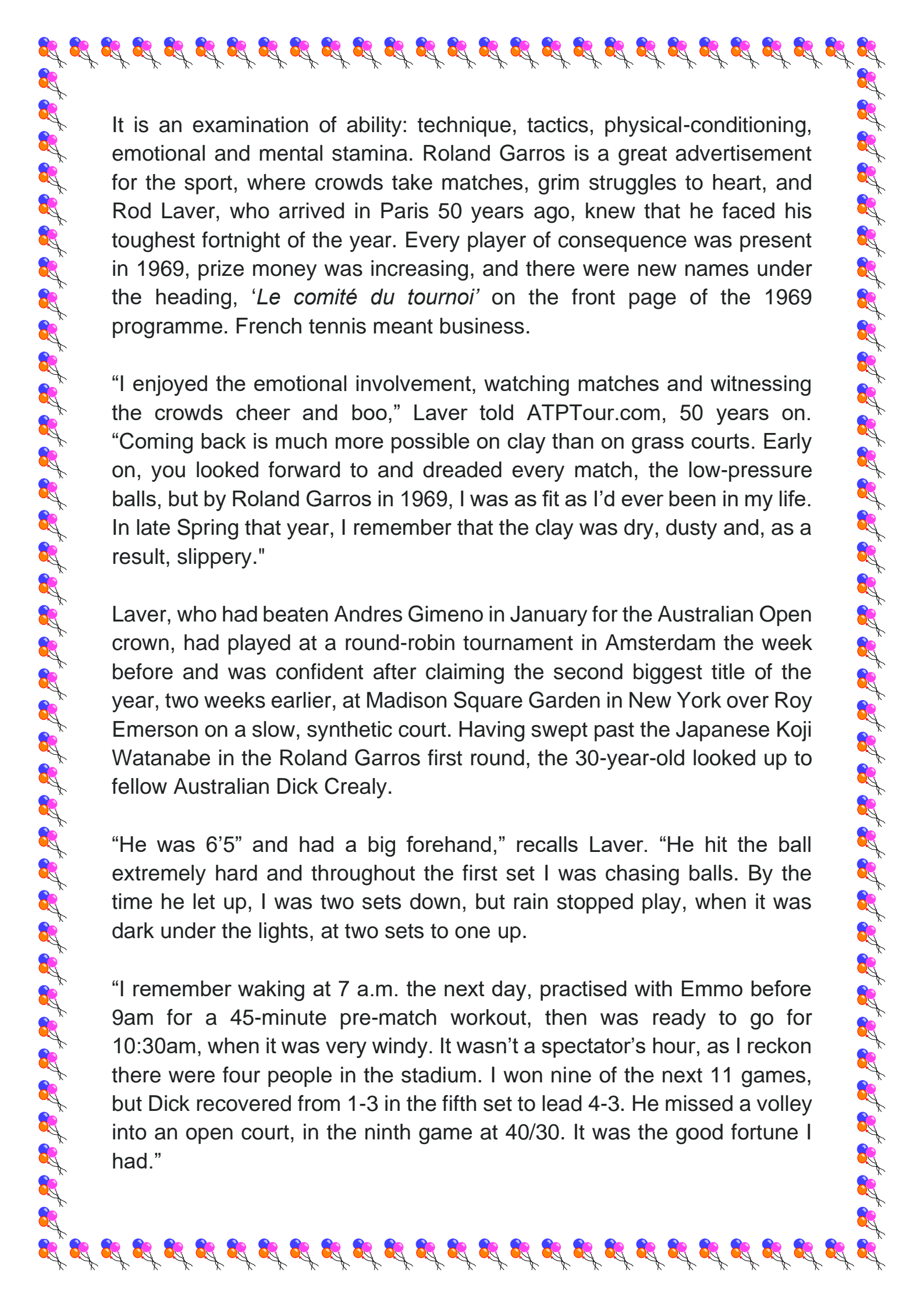
Today, only one photograph exists of the trophy ceremony of the first Australian Open on 27 January 1969. Even when looking at the black-and-white snap, the freckles, the slight frame and the muscular left forearm are unmistakable. Laver, with sweat on his brow and a white towel wrapped around his shoulders, looks the president of the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia, Charles Edwards, straight in the eyes upon receiving the sterling silver and silver gilt Norman Brookes Challenge Cup, which took 800 man-hours to create in 1926. The scene, on the middle of three grass courts at the Milton Courts in Brisbane, witnessed by a sparse crowd on green wooden bleachers and as few as 15 journalists, was the first step of Laver's historic ninth-month journey to the calendar-year Grand Slam.

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In the *Second* of a four-part series, Rod Laver looks back to *1969 Roland Garros*, the second step to his historic second Grand Slam

Source:

<https://www.atptour.com/en/news/laver-1969-grand-slam-roland-garros-feature>




It is an examination of ability: technique, tactics, physical-conditioning, emotional and mental stamina. Roland Garros is a great advertisement for the sport, where crowds take matches, grim struggles to heart, and Rod Laver, who arrived in Paris 50 years ago, knew that he faced his toughest fortnight of the year. Every player of consequence was present in 1969, prize money was increasing, and there were new names under the heading, '*Le comité du tournoi*' on the front page of the 1969 programme. French tennis meant business.

"I enjoyed the emotional involvement, watching matches and witnessing the crowds cheer and boo," Laver told ATPTour.com, 50 years on. "Coming back is much more possible on clay than on grass courts. Early on, you looked forward to and dreaded every match, the low-pressure balls, but by Roland Garros in 1969, I was as fit as I'd ever been in my life. In late Spring that year, I remember that the clay was dry, dusty and, as a result, slippery."

Laver, who had beaten Andres Gimeno in January for the Australian Open crown, had played at a round-robin tournament in Amsterdam the week before and was confident after claiming the second biggest title of the year, two weeks earlier, at Madison Square Garden in New York over Roy Emerson on a slow, synthetic court. Having swept past the Japanese Koji Watanabe in the Roland Garros first round, the 30-year-old looked up to fellow Australian Dick Crealy.

"He was 6'5" and had a big forehand," recalls Laver. "He hit the ball extremely hard and throughout the first set I was chasing balls. By the time he let up, I was two sets down, but rain stopped play, when it was dark under the lights, at two sets to one up.

"I remember waking at 7 a.m. the next day, practised with Emmo before 9am for a 45-minute pre-match workout, then was ready to go for 10:30am, when it was very windy. It wasn't a spectator's hour, as I reckon there were four people in the stadium. I won nine of the next 11 games, but Dick recovered from 1-3 in the fifth set to lead 4-3. He missed a volley into an open court, in the ninth game at 40/30. It was the good fortune I had."



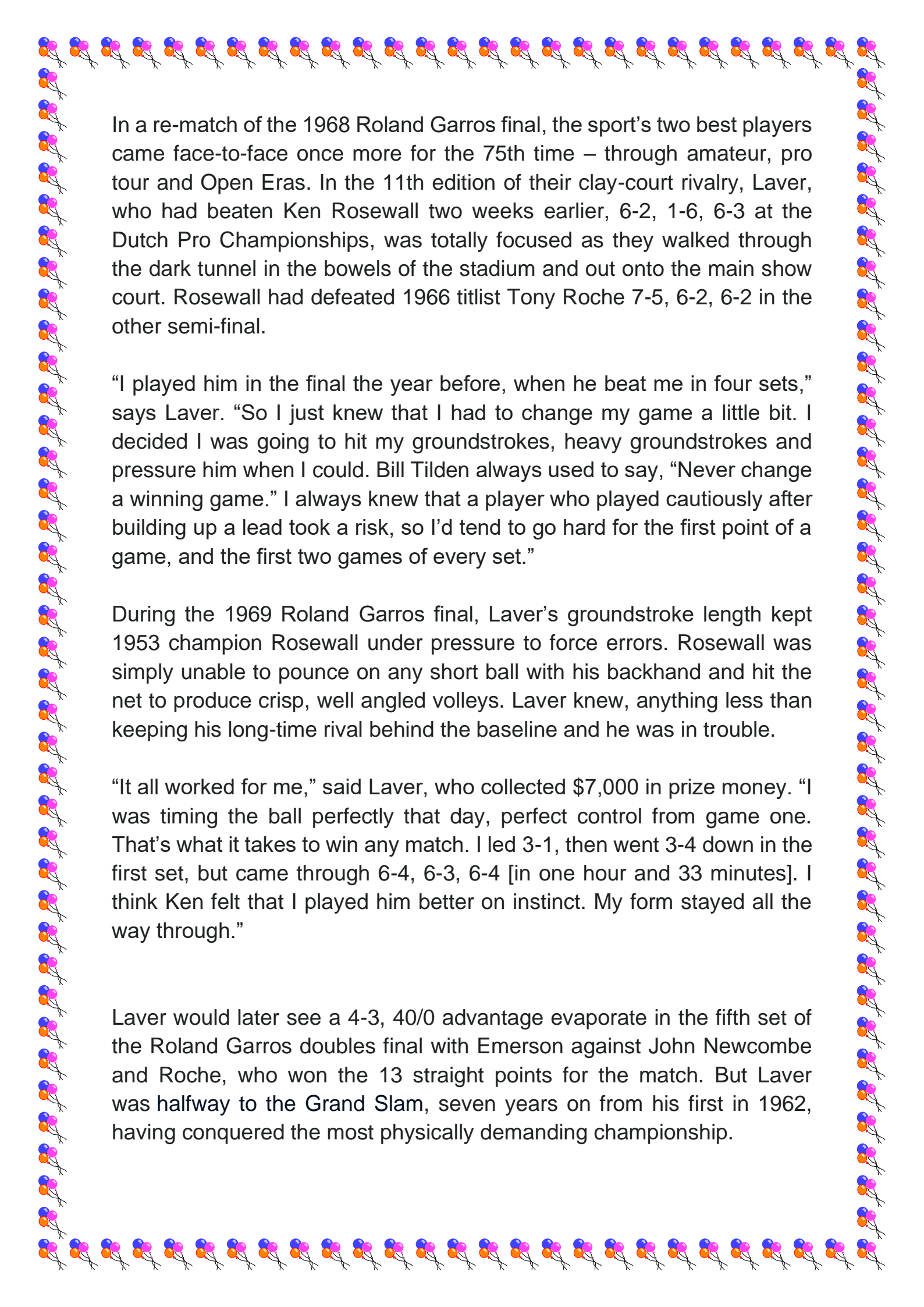
Laver completed a 3-6, 7-9, 6-2, 6-2, 6-4 second-round victory with the wind on his back, grateful to survive. "The tournament committee were eager to get to the quarter-final stage by the end of the week, so, on the same day, after some lunch, I came out to beat Italian Pietro Marzano [6-1, 6-0, 8-6]," he said.

"I then played Stan Smith, the 6'4" big-hitter, who was rapidly improving and I had a tough match against him a month later at Wimbledon. He had a cold, it was cold and the match finished in drizzle. I didn't want it to be carried over to the next morning [again], so I worked hard in the third set [for a 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 win]."

Laver, who first travelled to compete in Paris in 1956, had to learn to play on clay, and prior to 1962, when he won his first calendar-year Grand Slam, had a 6-5 match record at the championship. "I had to learn to play on clay," said Laver. "I've always believed that the key to playing well on clay is having patience and strength in your legs. It is all about accuracy over speed as clay blunts serve power, but it's an exciting test of your abilities. To me, the importance of getting first serves in was key, as I didn't have a cannonball serve, but I did fire the occasional ace."

Through to the quarter-finals in 1969, Laver then waited on Gimeno, who shook off nerves to edge past 1961 and 1964 champion Manuel Santana, who had pulled a groin muscle in lunging for a ball in the fourth set. "Perhaps the victory in the previous round, helped him to win the first set against me, but I got down to work by keeping the ball low, slicing my backhand and heading to the net. Slicing was more often the best form of attack, giving you time to approach the net. You didn't think Gimeno ever thought he could beat you, but he gave a good show and I won in four sets [3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3]."

Laver then challenged Tom Okker, a terrifically quick Dutchman with fast reflexes and a hitter of big topspin strokes. "This was early Okker, but he won the first set and I knew that I had to dig in," says Laver. "By then, I'd sharpened my anticipation and remember half-volleying well and taking the net away from him to win [4-6, 6-0, 6-2, 6-4]."



In a re-match of the 1968 Roland Garros final, the sport's two best players came face-to-face once more for the 75th time – through amateur, pro tour and Open Eras. In the 11th edition of their clay-court rivalry, Laver, who had beaten Ken Rosewall two weeks earlier, 6-2, 1-6, 6-3 at the Dutch Pro Championships, was totally focused as they walked through the dark tunnel in the bowels of the stadium and out onto the main show court. Rosewall had defeated 1966 titlist Tony Roche 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 in the other semi-final.

“I played him in the final the year before, when he beat me in four sets,” says Laver. “So I just knew that I had to change my game a little bit. I decided I was going to hit my groundstrokes, heavy groundstrokes and pressure him when I could. Bill Tilden always used to say, “Never change a winning game.” I always knew that a player who played cautiously after building up a lead took a risk, so I’d tend to go hard for the first point of a game, and the first two games of every set.”

During the 1969 Roland Garros final, Laver’s groundstroke length kept 1953 champion Rosewall under pressure to force errors. Rosewall was simply unable to pounce on any short ball with his backhand and hit the net to produce crisp, well angled volleys. Laver knew, anything less than keeping his long-time rival behind the baseline and he was in trouble.

“It all worked for me,” said Laver, who collected \$7,000 in prize money. “I was timing the ball perfectly that day, perfect control from game one. That’s what it takes to win any match. I led 3-1, then went 3-4 down in the first set, but came through 6-4, 6-3, 6-4 [in one hour and 33 minutes]. I think Ken felt that I played him better on instinct. My form stayed all the way through.”

Laver would later see a 4-3, 40/0 advantage evaporate in the fifth set of the Roland Garros doubles final with Emerson against John Newcombe and Roche, who won the 13 straight points for the match. But Laver was halfway to the Grand Slam, seven years on from his first in 1962, having conquered the most physically demanding championship.

"A Grand Slam year starts in January and ends in September; from the Australian Open and ends with the US Open," said Laver. "You have to win 28 matches, not beat 128 players in every draw. While I knew Wimbledon and the US Open would be tricky, the dream was alive."

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In the **THIRD** of a four-part series this year, Rod Laver looks back 50 years to **1969 Wimbledon**, the third step to his historic second Grand Slam


Source:

<https://www.atptour.com/en/news/laver-1969-grand-slam-wimbledon-feature>

With the first two major trophies in the bag, the lure of The All England Club beckoned Rod Laver, halfway to the calendar year Grand Slam, in the summer of 1969. But the pressure of performing at The Championships meant that even with a 21-match winning streak at Wimbledon — 24 if you included the historic pro event in August 1967, a major stepping stone to Open tennis — the Australian wasn't leaving anything to chance.

At the peak of his powers, Laver holed up at a Dolphin Square apartment with his wife, Mary, who was seven months pregnant, and nursed a long-injured left elbow that had required a cortisone injection in Los Angeles, a couple of months earlier. He'd occasionally drive to SW19, but often took a Bentley or Rolls Royce, with a few other players picked up from central London hotels, to within 30 yards of Rudyard Kipling's famous quote above the doors onto Centre Court. Stepping out of a courtesy car, they would turn left to the men's locker room, long since demolished.

"I enjoyed playing at Wimbledon, I felt that I played some of my best tennis there," Laver exclusively told ATPTour.com, 50 years on. "Not that I enjoyed the pressure, but my concentration levels seemed to increase. I

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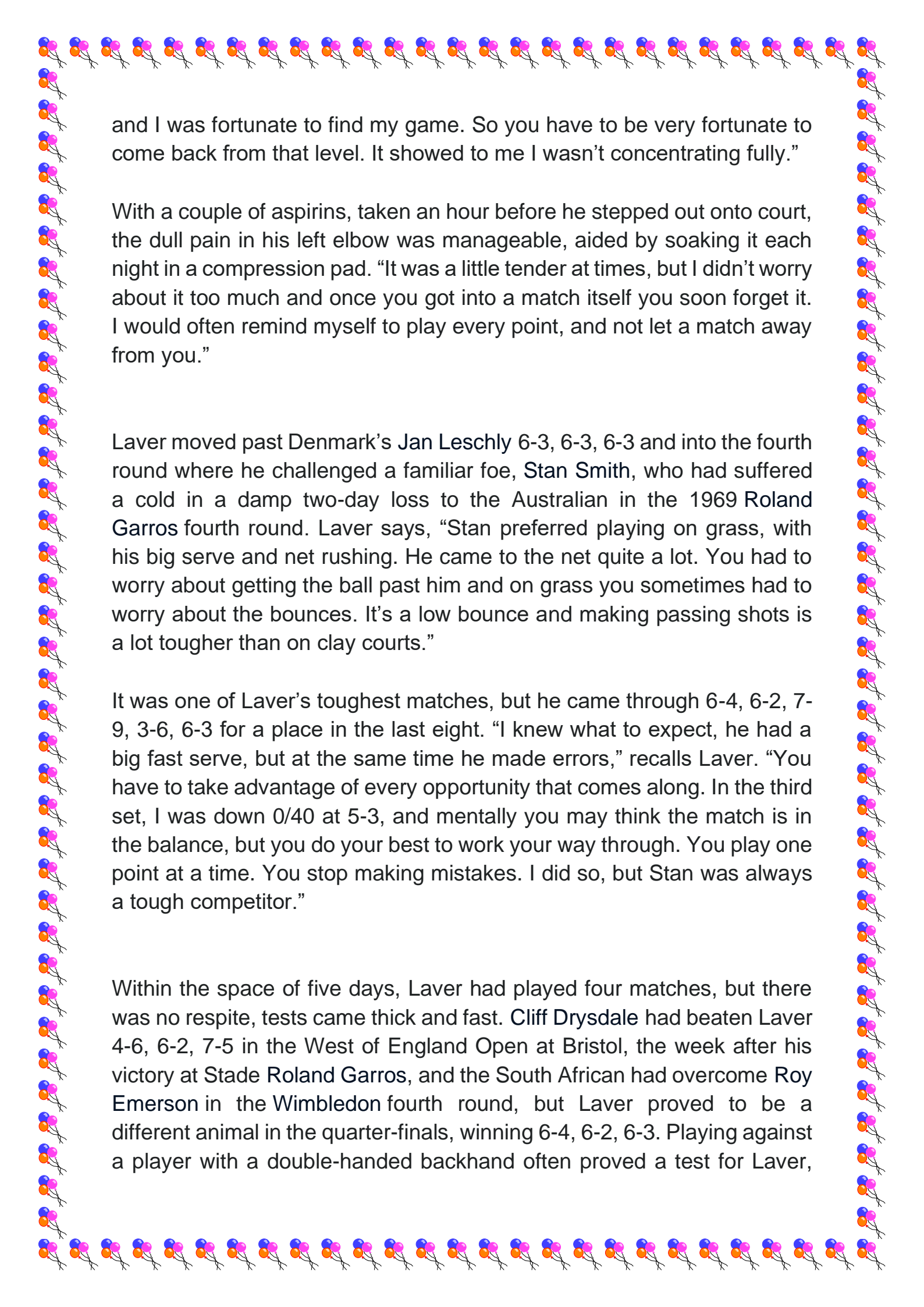
always felt good about coming to Wimbledon and I gave myself every chance. I prepared well on the practice courts ahead of the tournament and I was ready to compete against everybody.”

For many players arriving at The All England Club is a pilgrimage, but for Australians, ever since Frank Sedgman became only the fourth man to win the triple crown — of Wimbledon singles, doubles and mixed doubles titles — in 1952, competing at The Championships is a source of national pride. Laver, who was absent for five years between 1963 and 1967 as a contract professional, had last lost at Wimbledon to Neale Fraser in the 1960 final.

“I didn’t feel unhappy about my first match,” admits Laver, who beat Nicola Pietrangeli 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 on Centre Court in the first round, which was carried over to the second day as a result of a wash out. “He was more of a clay-court player. He did play on grass, I’d played him at Wimbledon in other years. I felt comfortable about serve and volleying, and as he played a baseline game I felt comfortable about attacking him as there was no pressure at the net.”

As Charlie Pasarell and Pancho Gonzales battled it out on Centre Court in what, until John Isner and Nicolas Mahut’s 2010 epic, was the longest Wimbledon match in history, Laver was in a muddle on No. 4 Court, watched by a vast crowd in the aisles between courts, down 6-3, 6-4, 3-2 against Indian Premjit Lall, a university-educated, one-time cement salesman. “There was a lot riding on that tournament,” reflects Laver, on the eve of the 2019 championships. “I’d already won two legs of the Slam and I thought my chances of winning Wimbledon were okay, so I put pressure on myself.”

Word began to spread around The All England Club of Laver’s plight, but at 3-4 in the third set, Lall pulled up, rubbing his legs and afflicted by cramp. He missed two smashes and lost the game, never to win another one that day. “I was very fortunate to come through that match,” says Laver, who won 15 straight games. “I pretty much underestimated him playing so well on the grass courts. He had a good serve and I was struggling. My confidence levels weren’t there. I started off on a bad note



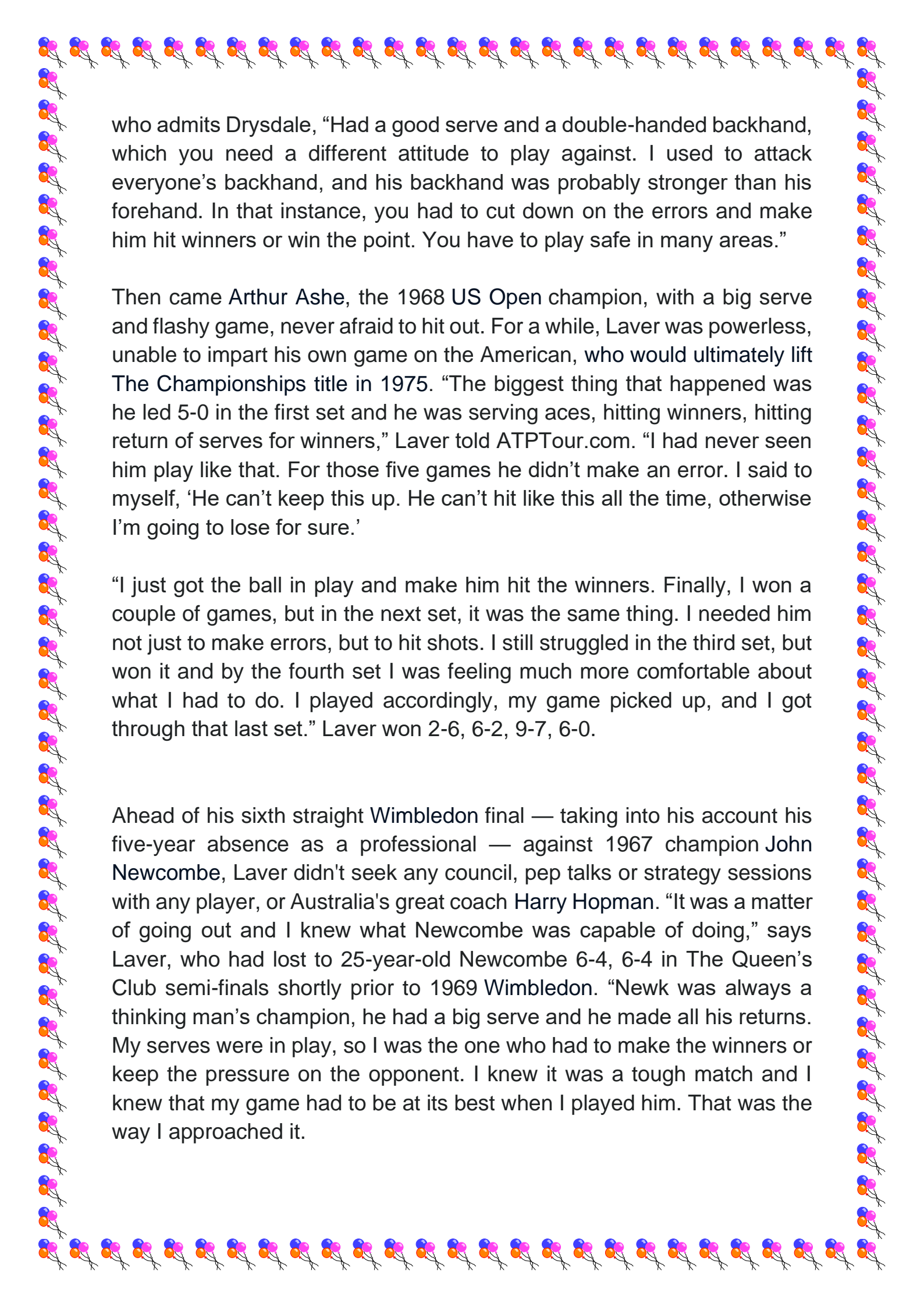
and I was fortunate to find my game. So you have to be very fortunate to come back from that level. It showed to me I wasn't concentrating fully."

With a couple of aspirins, taken an hour before he stepped out onto court, the dull pain in his left elbow was manageable, aided by soaking it each night in a compression pad. "It was a little tender at times, but I didn't worry about it too much and once you got into a match itself you soon forget it. I would often remind myself to play every point, and not let a match away from you."

Laver moved past Denmark's Jan Leschly 6-3, 6-3, 6-3 and into the fourth round where he challenged a familiar foe, Stan Smith, who had suffered a cold in a damp two-day loss to the Australian in the 1969 Roland Garros fourth round. Laver says, "Stan preferred playing on grass, with his big serve and net rushing. He came to the net quite a lot. You had to worry about getting the ball past him and on grass you sometimes had to worry about the bounces. It's a low bounce and making passing shots is a lot tougher than on clay courts."

It was one of Laver's toughest matches, but he came through 6-4, 6-2, 7-9, 3-6, 6-3 for a place in the last eight. "I knew what to expect, he had a big fast serve, but at the same time he made errors," recalls Laver. "You have to take advantage of every opportunity that comes along. In the third set, I was down 0/40 at 5-3, and mentally you may think the match is in the balance, but you do your best to work your way through. You play one point at a time. You stop making mistakes. I did so, but Stan was always a tough competitor."

Within the space of five days, Laver had played four matches, but there was no respite, tests came thick and fast. Cliff Drysdale had beaten Laver 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in the West of England Open at Bristol, the week after his victory at Stade Roland Garros, and the South African had overcome Roy Emerson in the Wimbledon fourth round, but Laver proved to be a different animal in the quarter-finals, winning 6-4, 6-2, 6-3. Playing against a player with a double-handed backhand often proved a test for Laver,

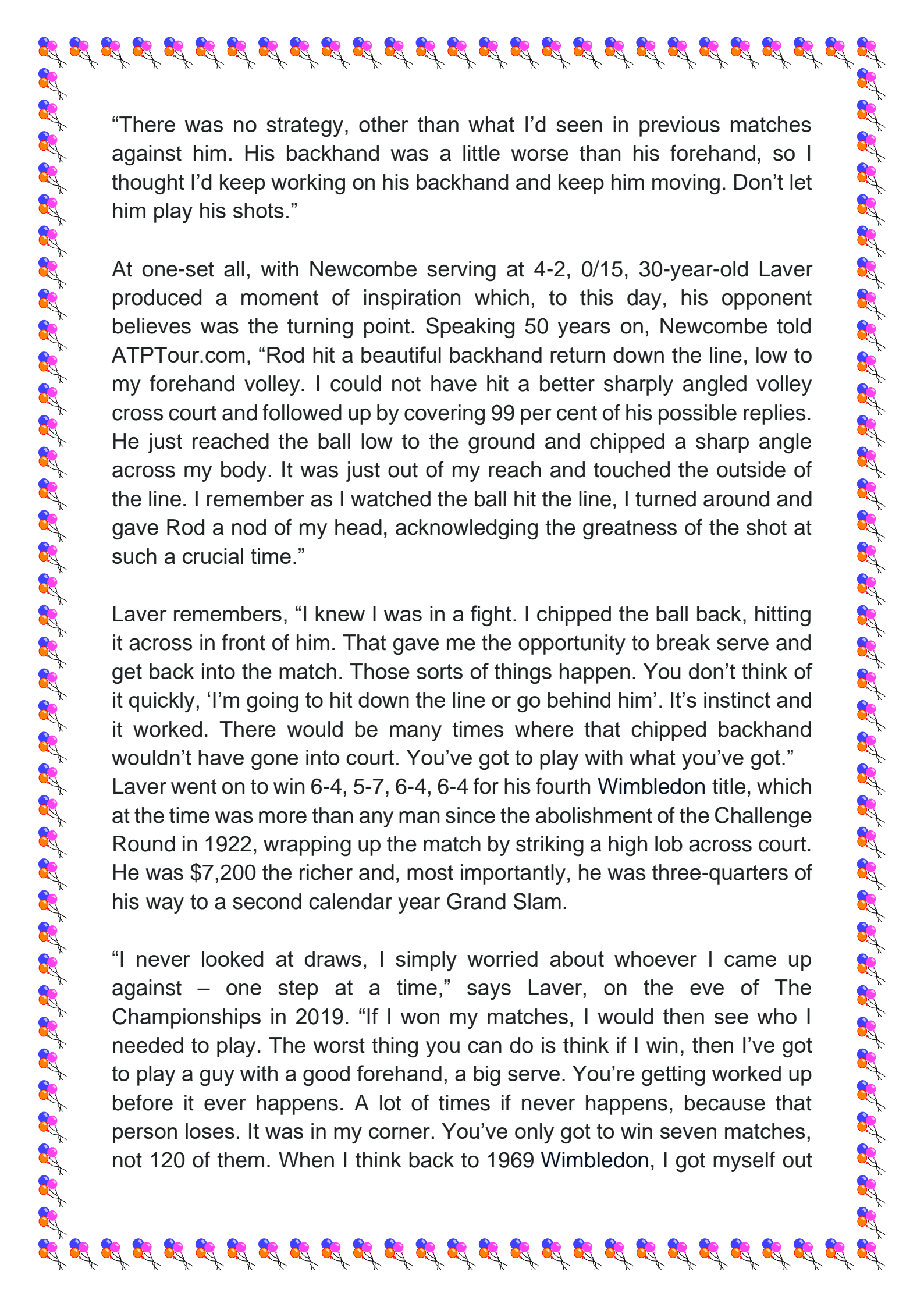
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who admits Drysdale, “Had a good serve and a double-handed backhand, which you need a different attitude to play against. I used to attack everyone’s backhand, and his backhand was probably stronger than his forehand. In that instance, you had to cut down on the errors and make him hit winners or win the point. You have to play safe in many areas.”

Then came Arthur Ashe, the 1968 US Open champion, with a big serve and flashy game, never afraid to hit out. For a while, Laver was powerless, unable to impart his own game on the American, who would ultimately lift The Championships title in 1975. “The biggest thing that happened was he led 5-0 in the first set and he was serving aces, hitting winners, hitting return of serves for winners,” Laver told ATPTour.com. “I had never seen him play like that. For those five games he didn’t make an error. I said to myself, ‘He can’t keep this up. He can’t hit like this all the time, otherwise I’m going to lose for sure.’

“I just got the ball in play and make him hit the winners. Finally, I won a couple of games, but in the next set, it was the same thing. I needed him not just to make errors, but to hit shots. I still struggled in the third set, but won it and by the fourth set I was feeling much more comfortable about what I had to do. I played accordingly, my game picked up, and I got through that last set.” Laver won 2-6, 6-2, 9-7, 6-0.

Ahead of his sixth straight Wimbledon final — taking into his account his five-year absence as a professional — against 1967 champion John Newcombe, Laver didn't seek any council, pep talks or strategy sessions with any player, or Australia's great coach Harry Hopman. “It was a matter of going out and I knew what Newcombe was capable of doing,” says Laver, who had lost to 25-year-old Newcombe 6-4, 6-4 in The Queen’s Club semi-finals shortly prior to 1969 Wimbledon. “Newk was always a thinking man’s champion, he had a big serve and he made all his returns. My serves were in play, so I was the one who had to make the winners or keep the pressure on the opponent. I knew it was a tough match and I knew that my game had to be at its best when I played him. That was the way I approached it.

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“There was no strategy, other than what I’d seen in previous matches against him. His backhand was a little worse than his forehand, so I thought I’d keep working on his backhand and keep him moving. Don’t let him play his shots.”

At one-set all, with Newcombe serving at 4-2, 0/15, 30-year-old Laver produced a moment of inspiration which, to this day, his opponent believes was the turning point. Speaking 50 years on, Newcombe told ATPTour.com, “Rod hit a beautiful backhand return down the line, low to my forehand volley. I could not have hit a better sharply angled volley cross court and followed up by covering 99 per cent of his possible replies. He just reached the ball low to the ground and chipped a sharp angle across my body. It was just out of my reach and touched the outside of the line. I remember as I watched the ball hit the line, I turned around and gave Rod a nod of my head, acknowledging the greatness of the shot at such a crucial time.”

Laver remembers, “I knew I was in a fight. I chipped the ball back, hitting it across in front of him. That gave me the opportunity to break serve and get back into the match. Those sorts of things happen. You don’t think of it quickly, ‘I’m going to hit down the line or go behind him’. It’s instinct and it worked. There would be many times where that chipped backhand wouldn’t have gone into court. You’ve got to play with what you’ve got.”

Laver went on to win 6-4, 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 for his fourth Wimbledon title, which at the time was more than any man since the abolishment of the Challenge Round in 1922, wrapping up the match by striking a high lob across court. He was \$7,200 the richer and, most importantly, he was three-quarters of his way to a second calendar year Grand Slam.

“I never looked at draws, I simply worried about whoever I came up against – one step at a time,” says Laver, on the eve of The Championships in 2019. “If I won my matches, I would then see who I needed to play. The worst thing you can do is think if I win, then I’ve got to play a guy with a good forehand, a big serve. You’re getting worked up before it ever happens. A lot of times if never happens, because that person loses. It was in my corner. You’ve only got to win seven matches, not 120 of them. When I think back to 1969 Wimbledon, I got myself out

of a lot of trouble against Premjit Lall, and then the matches against Stan, Arthur Ashe and Newk were very problematic.”

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In the **Final** part of this year's series, Rod Laver looks back 50 years to the **1969 US Open**, when he completed his second calendar-year Grand Slam.

**Source:**


<https://www.atptour.com/en/news/laver-1969-grand-slam-us-open-feature>

If Rod Laver was feeling any pressure, he certainly wasn't showing it on the eve of the 1969 US Open, where he had a second shot at history.

With his heavily pregnant wife, Mary, at home in Newport Beach, California, the Australian arrived at the Tudor City apartment of actor Charlton Heston, on the east side of Manhattan in New York City, riding a 23-match winning streak, which included consecutive titles at the US Pro Championships in Boston, St. Louis, Binghamton, Fort Worth and Baltimore.

Laver was in great shape and full of confidence ahead of his shot at completing a second calendar-year Grand Slam. Any thoughts about a dip in form didn't enter the mind of 31-year-old. Only the due date of his first child, revealed by his wife by telephone when he was competing in Brisbane at the 1969 Australian Open in January was of a concern. The same day as the US Open final, 9 September.

Speaking exclusively to ATPTour.com 50 years on, Laver admitted, “It's a strange thing, but I didn't really have any let-downs, whatever the championship. I just kept on playing. If I enjoyed it, why would I stop?



Because I won Wimbledon and then headed over for the US circuit, I was playing and keeping myself in good shape and playing well.

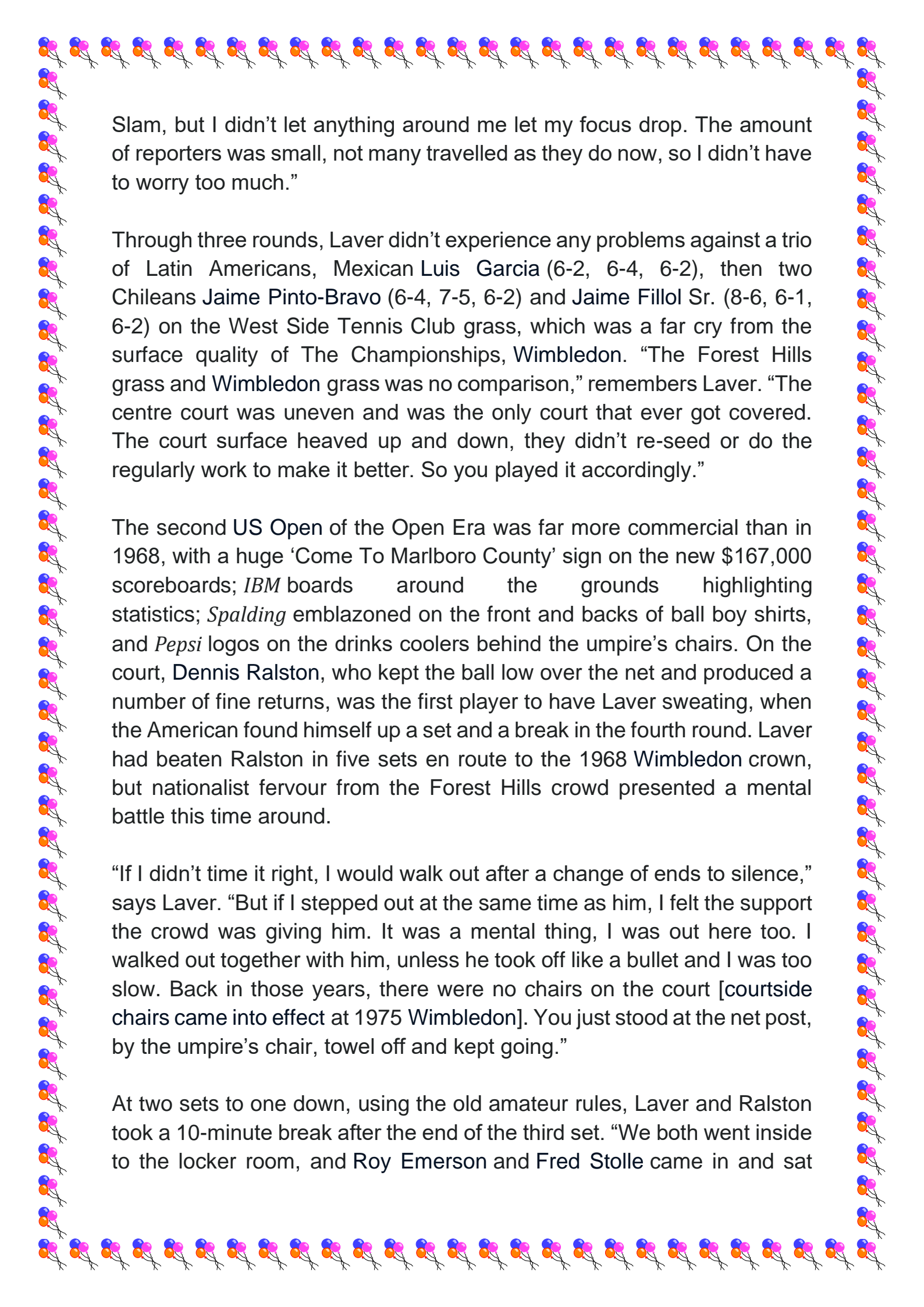
“Once Wimbledon ended, Mary returned to California and I went on the road and didn’t look back. I felt I was busy with my program. I was very happy and Mary was happy too, she told me to do my thing. She had her daughter, Ann, with her and there was plenty of people around, so we left it as was. Thinking of Mary certainly eased my concerns about completing the calendar-year Grand Slam.”

Laver and his good friend, John McDonald, a former New Zealand Davis Cup player, took up residence in the apartment of Heston, who they had known since the late 1950s, when the Ben-Hur actor watched tennis at the Pacific Southwest tournament in Los Angeles, which, in the amateur era of the sport, was the latest US tournament played after the national championship.

“We played some tennis tournaments and he invited a group of players to his house in Beverley Hills,” remembers Laver. “He loved playing tennis, happy to be part of the tennis world as he played quite a lot of tennis to a good level, and we enjoyed meeting him.

“I was happy when Chuck said, ‘Why don’t you take my place in Tudor City, it’s under rent control and the price was right. Be my guest.’ McDonald also knew him through Wimbledon, so he came as my friend, driver and hitting partner. John was almost like a coach of mine. He knew all the things I was doing wrong, and he could immediately tell me how I could fix it, such as footwork, or ball toss on serve. His advice helped get me out of bad habits.”

Having read everything written en route to his 1962 calendar-year Grand Slam, Laver was now well versed about the media and limited his newspaper reading, merely content in preparing the grips on his racquets out of habit. “I didn’t know what people were writing about me in the columns,” says Laver. “I talked to [*CBS Sports* commentator and *Boston Globe* writer] Bud Collins at different times and he brought up the Grand

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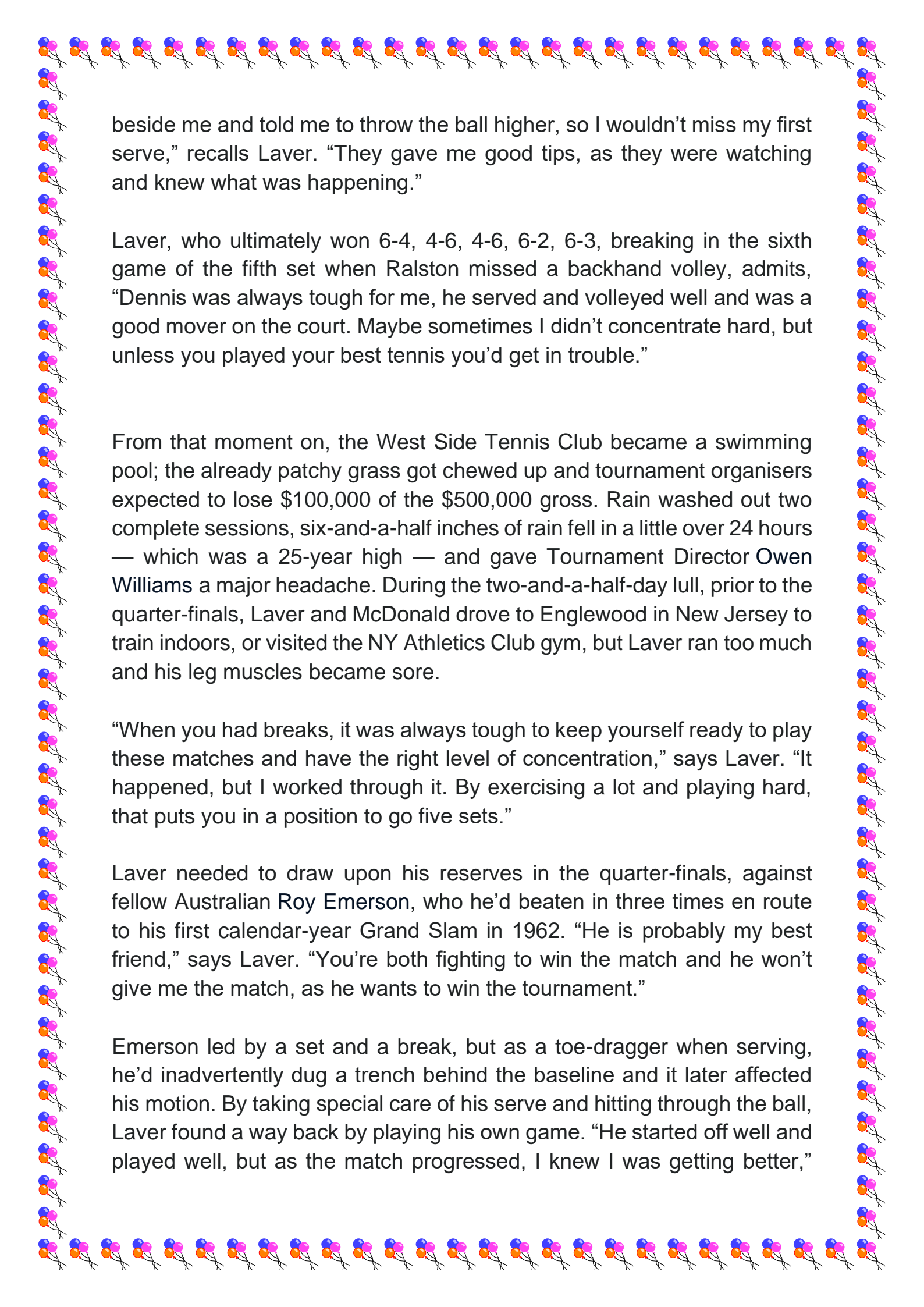
Slam, but I didn't let anything around me let my focus drop. The amount of reporters was small, not many travelled as they do now, so I didn't have to worry too much."

Through three rounds, Laver didn't experience any problems against a trio of Latin Americans, Mexican Luis Garcia (6-2, 6-4, 6-2), then two Chileans Jaime Pinto-Bravo (6-4, 7-5, 6-2) and Jaime Filloi Sr. (8-6, 6-1, 6-2) on the West Side Tennis Club grass, which was a far cry from the surface quality of The Championships, Wimbledon. "The Forest Hills grass and Wimbledon grass was no comparison," remembers Laver. "The centre court was uneven and was the only court that ever got covered. The court surface heaved up and down, they didn't re-seed or do the regularly work to make it better. So you played it accordingly."

The second US Open of the Open Era was far more commercial than in 1968, with a huge 'Come To Marlboro County' sign on the new \$167,000 scoreboards; *IBM* boards around the grounds highlighting statistics; *Spalding* emblazoned on the front and backs of ball boy shirts, and *Pepsi* logos on the drinks coolers behind the umpire's chairs. On the court, Dennis Ralston, who kept the ball low over the net and produced a number of fine returns, was the first player to have Laver sweating, when the American found himself up a set and a break in the fourth round. Laver had beaten Ralston in five sets en route to the 1968 Wimbledon crown, but nationalist fervour from the Forest Hills crowd presented a mental battle this time around.

"If I didn't time it right, I would walk out after a change of ends to silence," says Laver. "But if I stepped out at the same time as him, I felt the support the crowd was giving him. It was a mental thing, I was out here too. I walked out together with him, unless he took off like a bullet and I was too slow. Back in those years, there were no chairs on the court [courtside chairs came into effect at 1975 Wimbledon]. You just stood at the net post, by the umpire's chair, towel off and kept going."

At two sets to one down, using the old amateur rules, Laver and Ralston took a 10-minute break after the end of the third set. "We both went inside to the locker room, and Roy Emerson and Fred Stolle came in and sat



beside me and told me to throw the ball higher, so I wouldn't miss my first serve," recalls Laver. "They gave me good tips, as they were watching and knew what was happening."

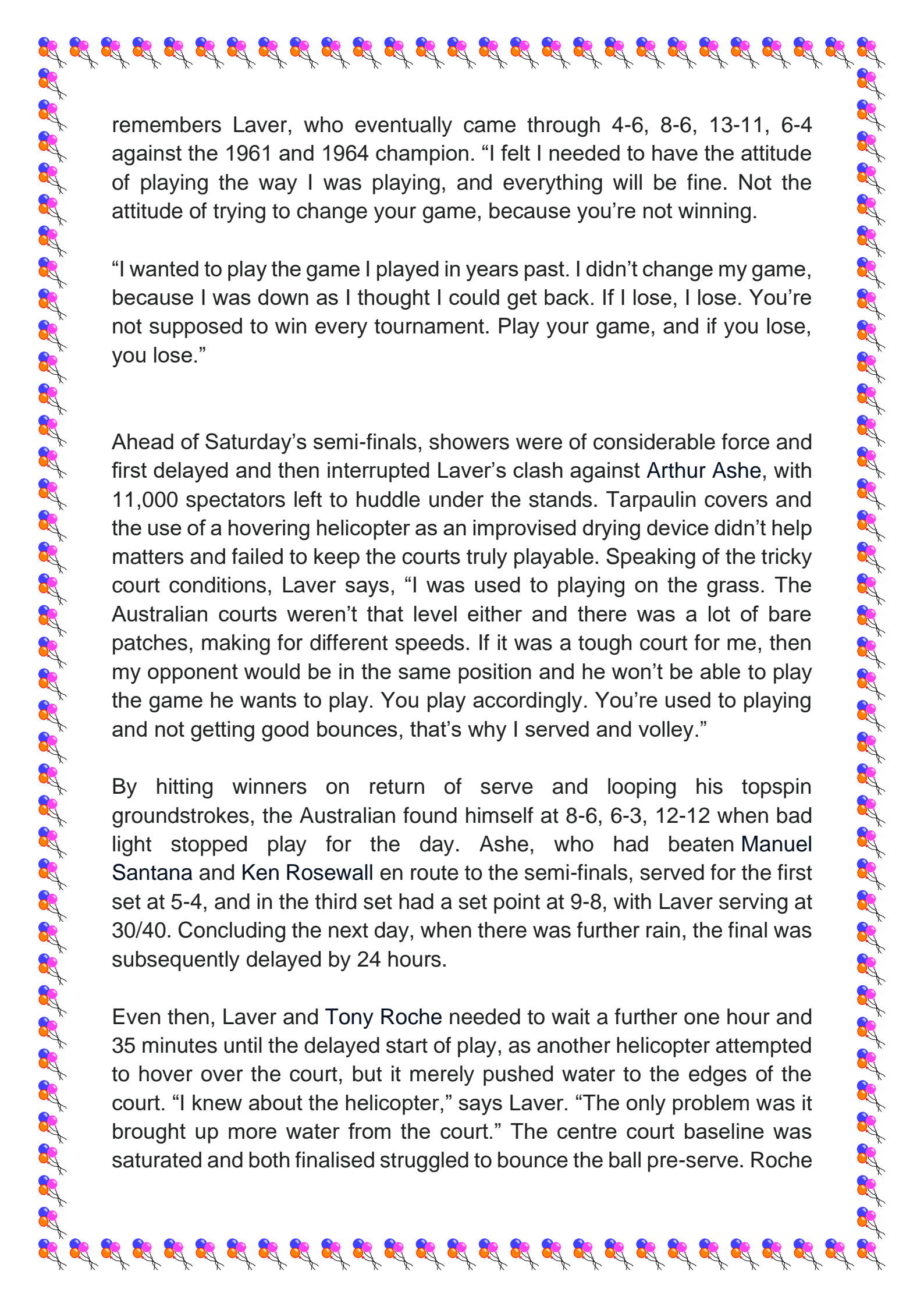
Laver, who ultimately won 6-4, 4-6, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3, breaking in the sixth game of the fifth set when Ralston missed a backhand volley, admits, "Dennis was always tough for me, he served and volleyed well and was a good mover on the court. Maybe sometimes I didn't concentrate hard, but unless you played your best tennis you'd get in trouble."

From that moment on, the West Side Tennis Club became a swimming pool; the already patchy grass got chewed up and tournament organisers expected to lose \$100,000 of the \$500,000 gross. Rain washed out two complete sessions, six-and-a-half inches of rain fell in a little over 24 hours — which was a 25-year high — and gave Tournament Director Owen Williams a major headache. During the two-and-a-half-day lull, prior to the quarter-finals, Laver and McDonald drove to Englewood in New Jersey to train indoors, or visited the NY Athletics Club gym, but Laver ran too much and his leg muscles became sore.

"When you had breaks, it was always tough to keep yourself ready to play these matches and have the right level of concentration," says Laver. "It happened, but I worked through it. By exercising a lot and playing hard, that puts you in a position to go five sets."

Laver needed to draw upon his reserves in the quarter-finals, against fellow Australian Roy Emerson, who he'd beaten in three times en route to his first calendar-year Grand Slam in 1962. "He is probably my best friend," says Laver. "You're both fighting to win the match and he won't give me the match, as he wants to win the tournament."

Emerson led by a set and a break, but as a toe-dragger when serving, he'd inadvertently dug a trench behind the baseline and it later affected his motion. By taking special care of his serve and hitting through the ball, Laver found a way back by playing his own game. "He started off well and played well, but as the match progressed, I knew I was getting better,"

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remembers Laver, who eventually came through 4-6, 8-6, 13-11, 6-4 against the 1961 and 1964 champion. "I felt I needed to have the attitude of playing the way I was playing, and everything will be fine. Not the attitude of trying to change your game, because you're not winning.

"I wanted to play the game I played in years past. I didn't change my game, because I was down as I thought I could get back. If I lose, I lose. You're not supposed to win every tournament. Play your game, and if you lose, you lose."

Ahead of Saturday's semi-finals, showers were of considerable force and first delayed and then interrupted Laver's clash against Arthur Ashe, with 11,000 spectators left to huddle under the stands. Tarpaulin covers and the use of a hovering helicopter as an improvised drying device didn't help matters and failed to keep the courts truly playable. Speaking of the tricky court conditions, Laver says, "I was used to playing on the grass. The Australian courts weren't that level either and there was a lot of bare patches, making for different speeds. If it was a tough court for me, then my opponent would be in the same position and he won't be able to play the game he wants to play. You play accordingly. You're used to playing and not getting good bounces, that's why I served and volley."

By hitting winners on return of serve and looping his topspin groundstrokes, the Australian found himself at 8-6, 6-3, 12-12 when bad light stopped play for the day. Ashe, who had beaten Manuel Santana and Ken Rosewall en route to the semi-finals, served for the first set at 5-4, and in the third set had a set point at 9-8, with Laver serving at 30/40. Concluding the next day, when there was further rain, the final was subsequently delayed by 24 hours.

Even then, Laver and Tony Roche needed to wait a further one hour and 35 minutes until the delayed start of play, as another helicopter attempted to hover over the court, but it merely pushed water to the edges of the court. "I knew about the helicopter," says Laver. "The only problem was it brought up more water from the court." The centre court baseline was saturated and both finalised struggled to bounce the ball pre-serve. Roche



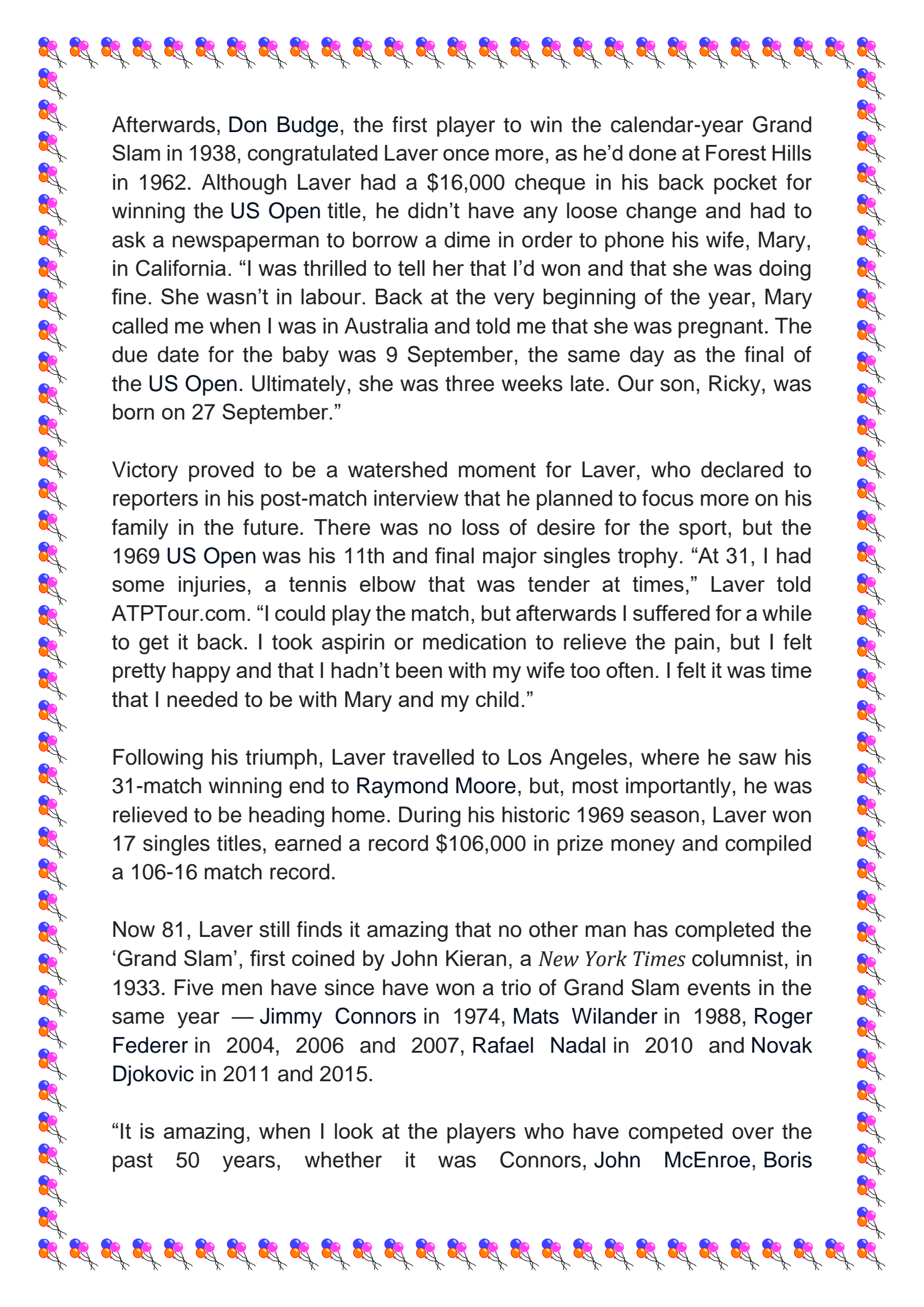
welcomed the delay, having come through a highly physical semi-final 3-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3, 8-6 over John Newcombe on Sunday.

Laver was wary of Roche, who would win five of their eight matches in 1969, but had gotten the better of him at the start of his Grand Slam year at the Australian Open, when one set of their semi-finals was 24-22. Thoughts of Laver's idol, Lew Hoad, who'd won the first three major championships of 1956 only to lose to Rosewall in the US Championships final, didn't enter the head of the 'Rockhampton Rocket'. "I wasn't afraid to lose," says Laver, of 9 September 1969, 50 years on. "But I knew it was going to be a very tough match, so I had to put my best foot forwards."

Laver served for the first set at 5-3 in soggy conditions, but soon asked Mike Gibson, the Wimbledon (1962-1975) and US Open (1969-70) referee, if he could put on spiked shoes. "I asked the referee, Mike Gibson, 'If I can't stand up on the grass, can I wear spikes?' He said, 'Certainly, as this is the last match. You're welcome to play in them.'" Roche got cramps when he wore spikes, so kept his tennis shoes on. Laver had played in spikes in Davis Cup ties and in Australia in the past.

"I ended up losing that set, but I had spikes on and felt more comfortable. The court was soft, and I found myself skidding in my spikes. After a run, you'd put your breaks on and slide through the shot. I had to keep plugging away, but I also knew I had to get my first serve in and volley more, not letting the ball bounce. It was easier to get used to it, but if you weren't used to it, it would be difficult to lift your feet up. You don't slide to the ball, but you stop and hit. It was a unique occasion to do so in one of my biggest matches."

Laver found himself down 30/40 in the first game of the second set, but worked past Roche, who was five of the last 23 games. Nothing, even a 30-minute rain delay at the start of the third set, could put off Laver, who went onto win 7-9, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 and complete his second calendar-year Grand Slam. The elation of the moment saw Laver leap over the net, momentarily forgetting how Herb Flam caught the net and tripped when he did so at Adelaide in 1957. "We did it in Australia at various tournaments. I was so happy to complete the year."



Afterwards, Don Budge, the first player to win the calendar-year Grand Slam in 1938, congratulated Laver once more, as he'd done at Forest Hills in 1962. Although Laver had a \$16,000 cheque in his back pocket for winning the US Open title, he didn't have any loose change and had to ask a newspaperman to borrow a dime in order to phone his wife, Mary, in California. "I was thrilled to tell her that I'd won and that she was doing fine. She wasn't in labour. Back at the very beginning of the year, Mary called me when I was in Australia and told me that she was pregnant. The due date for the baby was 9 September, the same day as the final of the US Open. Ultimately, she was three weeks late. Our son, Ricky, was born on 27 September."

Victory proved to be a watershed moment for Laver, who declared to reporters in his post-match interview that he planned to focus more on his family in the future. There was no loss of desire for the sport, but the 1969 US Open was his 11th and final major singles trophy. "At 31, I had some injuries, a tennis elbow that was tender at times," Laver told ATPTour.com. "I could play the match, but afterwards I suffered for a while to get it back. I took aspirin or medication to relieve the pain, but I felt pretty happy and that I hadn't been with my wife too often. I felt it was time that I needed to be with Mary and my child."

Following his triumph, Laver travelled to Los Angeles, where he saw his 31-match winning end to Raymond Moore, but, most importantly, he was relieved to be heading home. During his historic 1969 season, Laver won 17 singles titles, earned a record \$106,000 in prize money and compiled a 106-16 match record.

Now 81, Laver still finds it amazing that no other man has completed the 'Grand Slam', first coined by John Kieran, a *New York Times* columnist, in 1933. Five men have since have won a trio of Grand Slam events in the same year — Jimmy Connors in 1974, Mats Wilander in 1988, Roger Federer in 2004, 2006 and 2007, Rafael Nadal in 2010 and Novak Djokovic in 2011 and 2015.

"It is amazing, when I look at the players who have competed over the past 50 years, whether it was Connors, John McEnroe, Boris

Becker, Pete Sampras, or Federer, Nadal and Djokovic in today's era," says Laver. "Years ago, a lot of people didn't look at the four major tournaments as a Grand Slam. Some didn't like going down to play in Australia in December or January. Maybe it was the circumstances that they didn't feel the impact of what the Grand Slam was.

"But the game is bigger now, people have looked closer at historic records over the past 20 years, and it's great that tennis celebrates its past. I've enjoyed my 50th anniversary celebrations."

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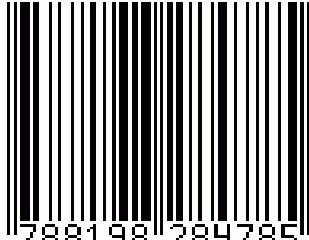
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ISBN 978-81-982847-8-5



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